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THE TRADUCED.

AN

HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY N. MICHELL;

AUTHOR OF

- THE FATALIST; OR THE FORTUNES OF GODOLPHIN;" &c.

Italia ! Oh Italia ! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past ;
On thy sweet brow is sorrow ploughed by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame.

Childe Harold.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

L O N D O N :

T. AND W. BOONE, 29, NEW BOND STREET.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE sun of Italy's glory has set, yet its beautiful twilight still lingers over the land. Each scene awakens recollections of the immortal past. Each dim remain of antiquity appeals to days of power and magnificence. The very air seems fraught with luxury and love; and every foot of ground is classic; every grey and moss-grown ruin is dear to the antiquary and scholar.

INTRODUCTION.

No period in the history of modern Italy, perhaps, is more interesting than the fourteenth century. It was then that literature, which seemed to have expired during the long night of Gothic barbarism, suddenly revived, like a phoenix, from her ashes. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, the matchless 'Etruscan three,' flourished. Naples was in the height of her prosperity under the sway of the Angevine Princes : Florence, Genoa, and Venice, were rivals in commerce and glory. The Popes, it is true, had transported the chair of St. Peter from the Tiber to the banks of the Rhone ; but, during their absence, arose that brilliant character, that wonder of his age and country, Nicola Rienzi, who, during his brief tribunate, restored the republican form, and half

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revived the slumbering spirit of ancient Rome.

Joanna, Queen of Naples and Countess of Provence, occupies a prominent place in the history of those times. The career of this woman, who is described as one of the most beautiful females that the "sunny south" has ever produced, is as extraordinary as it is interesting. Some historians hold her up to infamy; but others defend her character, declaring her to be "as wise and as virtuous a Sovereign as ever graced a throne."

This discrepancy in opinion may be attributed to strong political prejudices. The contention for her kingdom, and the great schism of the west, raised against her innumerable enemies. The most defamatory of her commentators are Nostra-

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damus, Collenuccio, and the two Villani of Florence; and, among other crimes, they accuse her of the assassination of her husband Andrea. To these authorities are opposed Boccaccio, Petrarch, who were her contemporaries, Bouche, Costanzo, with the impartial and profoundly learned historian Giannone. The last named writers express themselves fully satisfied of Joanna's innocence with regard to the imputation of murder: at the same time, they extol her in language perhaps overwrought, and injudiciously panegyrical, their encomiums being dictated in opposition to the sarcasms and calumnies of her foes.

From what has been adduced, an inference may be drawn that the guilt of Queen Joanna is a matter of extreme doubt; and

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if we judge her by the testimony of her most respectable contemporaries, and weigh the ability, and scrutinize the characters of her accusers, we shall scarcely hesitate to acquit her. The author of these pages, therefore, feels himself fully justified and supported in the view which he has taken of the question. He considers Joanna a woman slandered by the malignity of an adverse faction ; and, without passing on her the high eulogies of Bouche, who calls her, in his history of Provence, “*charmante en tous ses discours, et ravissante en ses actions—prudente en ses procédures, modérée en sa prospérité, et constante en ses adversités*”—he would do justice to her memory ; and, while he endeavours to give a faint delineation of manners as they then existed, he would detail in his nar-

CHAPTER I.

THE INTERVIEW.

Bear me, ye gods, to Baiæ's gentle seats!

Addison.

BETWEEN the ancient town of Baiæ, and the promontory of Miseno, stood, in the fourteenth century, one of the delightful summer villas of the Neapolitan kings. The mansion was situated on the side of a hill, which, covered with olives, sloped to the water's edge. It overlooked the isles of Ischia and Procida; and while it was protected from every rougher wind by a range of mountains on the north, it was fanned by cool delicious breezes from the sea.

Groves of myrtle and orange trees surrounded the royal residence. Here walks, strewn with

shells, led the stranger to grottoes and bowers, alike favourable to contemplation and love. There fountains threw up their diamond jets, sprinkling the terraces with their silver dew. Statues, the *chefs d'ouevres* of ancient Roman sculptors, met the eye at every turn: flowers, from the sweet-breathed mignonette, to the gorgeous rose of Pæstum, perfumed the air. Birds sang their happy summer notes among the blossomed trees; while a softer, a more aerial melody, arose from that bay over whose glassy bosom once glided the pleasure-barks of Augustus and Cicero.*

Such was the situation of the royal retreat at Baiæ; and here, in preference to the villas at Portici or Amalfi, did the Angevine princes enjoy their *villégiatura*, during the hot summer months.

Within the shade of an alcove that stood in a

* Augustus had a villa near Baiæ; Cicero's academy was close by the shore; and Lucullus occupied a mansion on the Promontory of Miseno.—*Eustace*.

retired part of the orangery, a solitary female was seated. Her dress betokened high rank. Her countenance, although gentle and frank in its expression, was characterized by a dignity seldom seen in a face so young. A copy of the "*Divina Commedia*" of Dante, lay beside her : she had been perusing the immortal Tuscan poet, but, in a fit of abstraction, had dropped the volume, and, motionless as death, was now gazing on a statue that stood on a marble pedestal before her. So thoughtful, so young, so melancholy, a by-stander might have imagined that pensive being, imitating the conduct of her whom that statue represented—the nymph Egeria waiting in the woods for her royal lover, Numa,—nor would his conjecture have been altogether false.

The lady, from her stooping posture, suddenly arose. She approached the entrance of the alcove, and gazing anxiously on a sun-dial, sighed audibly,—“The time is not arrived—he must not, he dare not come before the hour I mentioned—the stars only must witness

our interview." She seemed for a few minutes much agitated; but shortly recovering her tranquillity, she retired to her seat, and sank again into her melancholy reverie.

And this was Joanna, the youthful queen of Naples, who, from her extreme loveliness, gained and well merited the appellation of the "Beauty of the South."

Many and enthusiastic are the encomiums which the quaint chroniclers of a past age bestow on this celebrated female. Old Bouche and Brantome seem beside themselves while painting the charms of her person, and the perfections of her mind. Petrarch and Boccaccio represent her as a paragon of innocence and virtue; while the grave historians, Costanzo and Giannone, defend her triumphantly against the aspersions of her enemies. But whether she were a guilty thing, and whether her hands were imbrued with blood, let not the reader decide, until he has reached the last page of this history.

It was the fate of this young queen to have

been wedded to one she was unable to love. Indeed, we have reason to wonder that a similar indifference does not oftener attend royal alliances, since political interest, and not the heart, is almost invariably consulted. Joanna, it is true, had been brought up with the Hungarian prince Andrea from infancy: they had been affianced even when the former was but five years of age. Yet king Robert the Wise, although acting from the best motives, had not by this union, promoted his grand-daughter's happiness; but his bones were now cold in the convent of St. Clare, and he was spared the knowledge of the misery which his policy had entailed upon his gentle successor.

Joanna sat in the alcove, while her husband Andrea was draining the wine-cup with his courtiers in the villa. But wherefore was she there unattended by her maids of honour? and whom had she appointed to meet?—an answer to these interrogatories, it may be presumed, will be a reference to some imprudent assignation,—

but no ; to perform a deed of virtue—to sacrifice ardent affection to honour, was Joanna's intent ; and her spirit was heavy indeed, but strung to heroic firmness.

A rustling among the trees awoke Joanna from her meditations ; her heart fluttered, and the colour mounted to her cheek. A light step was now heard, and a cavalier of noble bearing entered the alcove.

The stranger, in person, was above the common height ; he was arrayed in the garb of peace. A dark velvet embroidered cap, with a white feather nodding on one side, adorned his head. His doublet or surcoat, bordered with miniver, was drawn closely around him, and displayed a figure of perfect symmetry. His hose was of rich crimson silk, and tight to his leg ; while his shoes, mounted with knots of rose-coloured ribbon, were formed in the quaintly pointed fashion of the times. A short Milan sword was his only weapon.

A greeting, at once embarrassed and affection-

ate, betrayed too plainly that a feeling more deep than friendship existed between the lady and the cavalier. The symptoms of love are never to be mistaken—the timid air, the averted eye, the whispered word, the colour that comes and goes—all are eloquent in revealing that sweetest, but most dangerous of human passions.

“ I fear, my fair cousin, I may have kept thee waiting,” said Louis; for such was the name of the gallant who stood in the presence of the young queen.

“ Nay, nay;” replied Joanna, as she bade him take a seat by her side; “ thou art here even before the time I specified—it is scarcely yet dusk; and shouldst thou be seen by any person in the villa, thy enemies and mine might work our mutual ruin.”

“ Doubt not my discretion,” answered Louis, “ for rather would I die than give malice and falsehood an opportunity to cast a shade of error on your conduct.”

A pause ensued; the dark and expressive

eyes of Joanna were fixed on the fountain, as though she counted the drops as they fell into the marble basin beneath. Her hand lay unconsciously in that of her lover's. The cavalier, who had removed his plumed cap, bent over her, and his raven locks, worn long, according to the custom of the day, fell on her ivory neck.—Martini* should have been present to have sketched in that attitude those bright impersonations of valour and beauty.

“ Why do I hesitate ?” said Joanna, raising her eyes ; “ Wherefore do I feel this struggle between affection and duty ? Oh, heaven ! grant me strength ! the task which I have undertaken is a difficult one, but it must, it shall be performed !”

“ What mean you ?” exclaimed Prince Louis ; “ Holy Madonna ! what hath happened ? your billet, delivered to me by your page, declares

* The celebrated Simon Martini, who flourished at this period, held the same station among painters, as Petrarch maintained among poets.

that you have something this evening of importance to communicate."

"True, Louis, most true;" returned the Queen with animation; "and I hasten at once to disclose the object of this interview. I am aware, that as relatives, we might have been allowed to cherish esteem for each other; but since you have dared to avow another sentiment, and I have been culpable—mad enough to listen to you—and, Oh! believe me, tongues already are busy with our fame—there remains but one alternative—for Andrea's honour—for my own peace, we must meet no more."

There was a decision in Joanna's manner, yet such kindness, such tenderness characterized her look and voice, that Louis could only reply by pressing more ardently the delicate hand which he held.

"This is presuming too much,—I—I—Louis, though you be my uncle's son, I cannot permit this!" and the Queen hastily withdrew her hand, while her cheek flushed, and her eye betokened displeasure.

Louis, in an instant, was on his knee, and craved forgiveness if his ardent feelings had prompted him to the commission of any thing that was incompatible with the respect he owed her. "I know," he cried, "I feel that I am unworthy of you—unworthy of your esteem, much less your love—yet my heart does not adore you the less. Must we part? I was indeed unprepared for this; but, Oh! send me not from your presence in anger!"

"Rise, Louis," whispered Joanna; "I forgive thee." The noble lover again placed himself by her side. The evening star, like the eye of an angel, began to look forth from the blue windows of heaven. The moon slowly rose over the woody hills of Castel-a-Mare; the fisherman trimmed his latine sail for his home at the foot of Vesuvius; and on Mount Posilippo, that bears the laurelled tomb of Virgil, the nightingale began her clear but not melancholy song.

Under any circumstances, the parting of those who love sincerely, passionately, cannot but be

attended with bitterness—bitterness of which they, who have not experienced the trial, can form but a feeble conception. At such a moment Philosophy may exert her influence, and a sense of duty urge the noble mind to bear its fate ; yet the pleadings of affection will not the less be heard, nor the lacerated heart the less severely bleed.

Louis and Joanna, although culpable in admitting feelings beyond those of friendship, when their peculiar situation is considered, must have a claim upon our sympathy. Joanna was not yet twenty years of age ; and her mother, Maria of Valois, having followed her father, as well as her grandfather to the tomb, she possessed few advisers. It is true, the upright bishop of Caillon formed one of the regency appointed by the late king Robert, during her minority ; and the famous Petrarch was her domestic chaplain and almoner : yet these persons were too removed in their situation to exercise an influence on her individual feelings, or to direct her private

actions. This responsible task devolved on a female named Philippa ; she was Joanna's bosom friend and confidant ; but Philippa, who had been raised by king Robert from the lowest class of society, having been even a laundress at Catania in Sicily, is described as both illiterate and unprincipled. It might be expected, therefore, that the path which such a woman would point out to the young queen, would be widely divergent from a correct one.

Philippa was aware of Joanna's imprudent attachment to Louis, and instead of repressing, endeavoured to give it every impulse in her power. Each circumstance then, being weighed, we must admire the resolution which Joanna had formed, of bidding the object of her affection farewell for ever.

They sat in silence ; their hearts were too full to give language to their emotions. They now conversed in broken sentences, whispers, and sighs, all indicative of the agitated state of their feelings. They gazed on the glorious landscape

around : it was fast fading into night. They heard the hymn to the Virgin chanted by the peasant, as he wandered heedlessly among the ruins of Roman baths, and Greek temples which line that shore. They listened to the deep toll of the abbey bell, as it echoed over the waves from the green isle of Procida. All nature seemed sinking into luxurious repose. It was the hour for love, and not for the indulgence of despondency or sorrow. They felt its influence ; tears stood in Joanna's eyes ; and Louis pressed more closely to the side of the being he adored.

They spoke for a few minutes eagerly, but their words were indistinct. Louis seemed earnestly pleading, while Joanna appeared indisposed to grant the object of his suit. At length she exclaimed :

“ Urge me no further ! I cannot, I dare not agree to such a measure.—Although I am conscious of the imbecility, and licentiousness of Andrea, he is still my husband. We were publicly, and solemnly wedded, although at an age when

neither of us was capable of forming an estimate of each other's character. No, Louis, I will never disgrace the crown of Naples by petitioning the Pope for a divorce !”

“ Such a petition, gentlest, dearest,” observed the cavalier ; “ could in no wise incur censure, or derogate in the slightest degree from your honour. Nature and justice are on your side. The ill advisers of the revered king Robert, by urging your union with Prince Andrea, took advantage of your tender, unconscious infancy ;—your will, if at that period you can be said to have possessed one, was totally unconsulted.—Is it just, is it consistent with the dignity of your station, that the Countess of Provence, and the Queen of this fair land, should be the puppet of political machinations ; the victim of a Hungarian faction ?”

“ Alas !” sighed the queen ; “ my subjects would ascribe a far different motive to my conduct than the wish of exercising queenly prerogative, or of benefiting my country, were I to obtain a

divorce from my husband Andrea. Are you not aware—" she trembled and turned pale as she proceeded—" are you not aware that suspicion and malice have fixed their withering eyes upon us!—what then of such a procedure would the people of Naples, would all Italy say!—no, my resolution is taken; and if you respect me—if— Oh! if you love me! you will no longer hesitate, but relieve me for ever of your presence."

Louis anticipated this conclusion, yet did not the less deeply feel the bitterness which her words conveyed. There was a virtue in Joanna's eye, a dignity, a determination in her demeanour, which, while they annihilated every hope, bade him no longer urge the step which he had proposed.—With a look where disappointment was blended with affection, he addressed the Queen.

" Be it so—since your dignity, honour, and happiness demand my departure, at the court of Naples I will be seen no more. Yet never shall I be able by the utmost effort of the cold world's philosophy, to efface your memory from my

heart. Would that I had never beheld you!—I had contemplated futurity, and fondly imagined that the course of my life would be one of glory and felicity.—What have I now in the dreary vista of coming years?—yet I would not, by fruitless complaint, occasion you one moment's uneasiness; think not of my sorrow, or of the wound you have inflicted,—yet, selfish that I am! I would not have you altogether forget me—no, ere we part, dear, dear Joanna, say that you will not forget me!”

The young Queen fixed her eyes, swimming with tears, upon the impassioned cavalier. For a minute she was unable to speak: she sobbed audibly, and then covered her face with her hands. At length she murmured in that soft and thrilling tone so peculiar to love in moments of deep emotion: “Nay, Louis—I will never—I can never forget you!”

They arose to say farewell; Joanna leant upon the shoulder of Louis; her long auburn hair, disordered by the evening dew, and wet with

her own tears, streamed like waves in the golden sunset. She felt how hard it was to part, yet her resolution was not shaken. He supported her—he clasped her to his breast; and it may be forgiven, if, at that moment he imprinted on her pale cheek his first—must it be his last kiss?

“Farewell, Louis, for ever!” sobbed Joanna, and, tearing herself from the arms of her lover, in a moment was lost amidst the surrounding foliage. Louis stood alone. Reflection and consciousness seemed awhile to have forsaken him.

“Is she gone,” at length he exclaimed; “Is all that I prize on earth lost for ever?”

He leant against the marble image of a Diana that stood in the centre of the alcove. His brow was sternly contracted—his eye fixed—his teeth were set, and his hands clasped together. He appeared endeavouring to master the passions that were raging in his bosom. He raised his foot, then struck it again on the ground. He half drew his sword as if he wished to wreak vengeance on some object; then with a quick, dis-

ordered step, paced the marble floor of the alcove.

“ He must die !” he muttered and laughed ; but that laugh was one of bitter agony.—He paused, and shuddered, for his mind was too noble to entertain, beyond a passing moment, the fearful thought which agitated him. Base as Andrea was, and the only bar to his felicity, he will never raise his hand against his life. No, he will rather bear his fate ; he will rather wander over the world ; he will rather rush on the spears of the foe, and meet that death which only can bring him oblivion.

He gazed a minute up the avenue where Joanna had vanished ; then wrapping his mantle around him, hurried away from the gardens of the villa.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANQUET.

Feast on and revel, dotards of an hour !
 Ah ! me, the motes that sport in morning's beam,
 The butterflies that haunt the noontide bower,
 Employ life's moments nobler far I ween.—
 God ! hast thou given to man his lordly mien,
 His towering fancy, and his soul of fire,
 Thus to the gross delights of sense to lean,
 And brute-like wade in Epicurus' mire ?—
 Thus sings the moral muse, but ah ! who heeds her lyre ?

M. S. Poem.

JOANNA, on parting with Louis, avoided the vicinity of the banquet-hall, where her husband Andrea feasted with his courtiers. In the solitude of her chamber, she gave way to a flood of tears. But a conviction of the inutility of sorrow, and the proud consciousness of having acted rightly, restored her in a short time to tranquillity.

There is no balm, perhaps, so holy to a bleeding heart, as the assurance that the anguish which it suffers, is occasioned by the sacrifice of some dear but forbidden treasure to the shrine of virtue or duty.—Joanna felt this, and, drying her tears, summoned her confidant, the aged Philippa, who had recently been dignified by the title of countess. Amalia, Louis's youngest sister, lately received by the Queen as her companion of honour, entered at the same time her camerella or boudoir. Joanna seated herself at her embroidery-frame,—for, in that age, the use of the needle was not considered unbecoming a queen—while Amalia, to enliven her task, chanted to a cithern one of the sweet mountain songs of Calabria.

We must now take a view of the banquet-room, where Prince Andrea made merry with his friends. The apartment occupied the right wing of the building, and was designed by Massuccio, the great architect of the period. Gay arabesques and rich friezes adorned the slender Corinthian

pillars. The floor was marble, and strewn with odoriferous herbs, a custom universal in that age. Paintings by Giotto, and Buffalmaco of Florence, were displayed upon the walls; and lofty Venetian mirrors glinted back the light of countless lamps, which were suspended from the ceiling by silver chains.

A long table of cedar-wood occupied the centre of the hall, and at which some fifty guests were seated. Behind the chair of each knight and baron, stood his page or his esquire, ready to minister to the wants of his master. He carved for him, replenished his goblet when empty, and held the ewer and napkin when he chose to cleanse his hands: such offices, now considered menial, those young aspirants of chivalry, whatever their rank, esteemed as honorary.

In modern times, this evening meal would have been called a dinner; but, in the fourteenth century, kings as well as peasants, dined generally at mid-day: it was therefore *la cena*, or the supper. Venison and wild boar, capon, heron,

and peacock, under which the board lately smoked and groaned, had been removed; and figs from Mount Massicus, apricots and luscious pomegranates, that once hung tempting in the gardens of the Terra di Lavoro; with sparkling Falernian, and exhilarating Lachryma Christi, called on the guests to do them justice; nor did they, with the exception of one individual, appeal to any in vain.

The jest, the laugh, the song, in spite of the presence of Prince Andrea, soon became general.—Oh! wine! thou generous, thou glorious elixir! how soon is thy spirit transferred to the heart of man! how many sparkling ideas wilt thou summon into existence! thou givest eloquence to the stammerer, and chasest like sunshine the shadows from the brow of care.

Elevated on a dais, and beneath a canopy of cloth of gold, Andrea was seated at the head of the convivial board. The consort of the Queen was the youngest son of Carobert, King of Hungary, the alliance having been formed, as

we have already stated, when the parties were mere children. It was imagined that the question of succession to the throne of Naples, which had been agitated in favour of the second branch of the family of Charles of Anjou, would, by this intermarriage, be for ever settled; the connexion, however, did not produce the results anticipated.

Andrea had gained man's estate; his appearance was neither dignified, nor prepossessing: his stature was small, and his features were coarse: but his deeply-sunk dull eye indicated neither ferocity nor cunning. Sensuality was stamped on his low brow, and broad lips; indeed his air was that of a consummate libertine; but, at the same time, he totally wanted the grace and exterior polish which oftentimes accompany dissolute manners.

On the right hand of Joanna's consort, as next to him in rank, sat the Duke of Durazzo. This individual, of whom frequent mention will be made in the course of our narrative, was a member of the royal family, and one of the

greatest plotters, and caballers of the age. In person he formed a striking contrast to the Hungarian Andrea. He was of Herculean proportions; his limbs had no superfluous flesh, but seemed to be all bone and muscle. On his brow thought and withering passions, rather than time, had drawn deep lines. His eye, which glowed beneath shaggy brows, like that which Orientals emphatically denominate "evil," betokened a spirit sinister and cruel. He was a man whom people courted through dread, and not from motives of attachment—a being who was hated yet not despised.

On Andrea's left were stationed his ghostly preceptor Friar Robert, and his tutor Nicola the Hungarian. These men, by virtue of their office, were generally near the person of the prince, and such a restraint must needs have been irksome to a young man of Andrea's habits. Nicola had little to distinguish him beside ineffable conceit, and a ridiculous affectation of book-learning. But Friar Robert, from the au-

thority which he assumed over his royal charge, and from the weight which he possessed in public affairs, was a personage of considerable importance.

This ambitious and extraordinary man was a Brother of the Cordeliers. By political intrigue, and favoured by the appearance of extreme sanctity, he had succeeded in almost crushing the power of the Regency, which consisted of four individuals authorized to control the public actions of Joanna until she should have attained the age of twenty-five. Thus the reins of government were virtually in the Friar's hands. Petrarch's description of this intriguing monk, though graphic and striking, is probably overwrought, the poet giving a deep colouring to the picture for the sake of effect. But he is represented by most of the chroniclers of the times, as a creature loathsome in body, and malignant in mind. He had a hunch-back, bleared and ferret-like eyes; his beard was matted and uncombed; and, on all occasions, in evidence

of his superior godliness, he dressed in the most filthy and ragged habiliments.

The remaining individuals who composed the convivial party were high in rank, and a few of them distinguished by superior talents. Such were Charles Artus, grand chamberlain of the kingdom: the celebrated Count Minervino, who had lately been liberated from prison; the author Boccaccio, although his immortal Decameron had not yet appeared; Martini the painter: and others whose names we need not enumerate.

Prince Andrea raised his *coppa d'oro*, brimming with Falernian. His potations already had been "pottle deep;" but he was one of those whose thirst increases with every draught they pour into the gulfs of their stomachs.

"Fair courtiers, and friends!" he cried, without rising from his seat; "welcome to Baiæ! if it so please ye, thus will we spend our time—we will hawk in the morning,"—here he spilt some of the wine on the table—"we will have glorious galley-races over the bay at noon"—a

hiccup cut short his harangue for a moment ; but he resumed, leering upon Friar Robert,—
“ and spite of holy San Antonio at my elbow, we’ll have wine and wassail in the evening.”

“ Right ! right ! gallantly spoken !” exclaimed several of the guests. Friar Robert alone looked grave, and placing his hand on his bosom, and raising his eyes to Heaven, he muttered with a profound sigh : “ *O oblectationes inanes adolescentiæ ignorantis !*”

It may be a matter of surprise that one so austere as Robert, should have been present at this bacchanalian meeting. His professed motive was to check the intemperance of Andrea ; but, in reality, he feared lest, in his absence, a cabal should be raised against him. He knew, also, that when heated with wine, men more freely express their feelings and opinions, a thorough acquaintance with which, as regarded the present company, would enable him the better to form his line of conduct.

“ The Virgin prosper Robert of Taranto, now

battling in Greece!" continued the Prince; "and may he make good his claim to the Byzantine empire!"

This was cheered with enthusiasm. Even the holy Friar could not refuse to honour the toast; and down his ample throat he poured a bumper of—cold water!

The Duke of Durazzo arose: there was a movement, a something like a shudder among the party, as all eyes for a moment glanced at that savage-looking man. Something he said in compliment to the Prince, hoping that his enjoyments at Baiæ would daily increase; then, asking in an under tone that was meant to awaken suspicion, why young Louis of Taranto had not joined their party, he resumed his seat amidst profound silence.

A graceful stranger waved his hand—his brow was all benignity, and his eye all mirth. His rich chesnut hair clustered about his cheeks, and fell in sunny curls upon his shoulders. It was Boccaccio: as yet he was known only as

an aspirant to the poetic laurel, and the platonic admirer of Maria of Sicily, the natural daughter of king Robert. He spoke briefly, but with grace and energy—"and now," he concluded, "an humble bard, San Marco pardon his presumption! would say,—long life to our liege Queen!"

"The Queen! the Queen! the Virgin, and every saint bless her!" burst from the assembly! it was observed, however, that neither Durazzo, nor the chamberlain Charles Artus arose; and that Prince Andrea looked sullen, rather than gratified.—"Ah!" thought the Hungarian Nicola at his elbow, "had the name of Joanna's pretty little bower-maiden, Fiametta, been substituted for her own, Andrea's eye, I warrant, would have sparkled brightly enough;" and Nicola's conjecture was correct.

Again and again, the bacchanalians drained their goblets. It was in vain that friar Robert, ever and anon, would lift his fore-finger in caution to the Prince. In vain he said, with a

devout shake of the head,—“ My son, be temperate; let not Satan, who taketh ambush in the wine-cup, overpower thy reason. Heaven only knoweth what I suffer by remaining here, and witnessing the profligacy of these unholy men. Yet, *tui gratia*, it is for thy sake, my son, my son!—Nevertheless, I do not wish thee to be as abstemious as myself—” here he divided a shrivelled raisin, and, with his bony fore-finger and thumb, guided the fragment to his mouth; it opened to a portentous width, and displayed two rows of masticators that resembled tusks rather than teeth.—“ No, no, my son; to follow thy field pastimes, and civil duties, thou requirest more nourishment than thy preceptor Robert. Howbeit, *moderatio et temperantia*—so, my dear youth, let that cup be thy last.”

“ My last, Father?” replied Andrea in a whine, that was meant to mimic the monk’s sanctified manner of speaking,—“ I love thee, but this vino Greco better.—Diavolo! Nicola, thou hast nothing in thy goblet!—fill, man,

fill!—my last, Signor Friar? no, my jolly old boy;—preach sermons to us when at Naples; but, while at Baiæ, as I said before, we will hawk it, regatta it, and—and, in spite of the devil, feast it!”

A deep groan was the Father's only reply.

“Poniskar! my Hungarian Orpheus!” thundered Andrea, “strike the lyre of thy most sweet throat—a song! a song!”

The Hungarian hesitated; the awe with which friar Robert inspired most present by his apparent austerity, and by the actual power which he possessed, forbade Poniskar to obey even the commands of his Prince.

“Marry, must I then set the example?” cried Andrea; and now, quite inebriated, he began a coarse, licentious song.

This proved too much for the devout Friar. He clasped his hands, and raising his eyes, fervently exclaimed,—“Domine! miserere hujus hominis miserabilis!”—But his further ejaculations were drowned amidst the roar that Andrea was mak-

ing. He then ordered Nicola to keep an eye on his royal charge, since he could remain no longer in that unholy place. He gathered his tattered weeds around him, drew his filthy cowl over his shaven crown, and, glancing around on the company with that air of superiority and defiance which he knew so well how to assume, slowly stalked from the hall.

Relieved from the presence of this singular being, who was dreaded as much as hated, the revellers breathed more freely. They could now indulge their inclinations without a check. But we leave them jesting over their cups, and 'startling the ear of night' with their licentious songs: yet the Hungarians, the creatures placed about the person of the unfortunate Andrea, and not the Italians, were the coarse unredeemed bacchanalians.

CHAPTER III.

A CLOSET SCENE.

“ It was monastic, and did grow
 In holy orders by strict vow.
 Of rule as sullen and severe
 As that of rigid Cordelier.”

Butler's Hudibras.

“ WHEREFORE dost thou proceed so fast ?” exclaimed Robert to a page, who was bearing a torch before him, as he wound along a gallery that led to a remote part of the building.—“ Sanctissima Virgo ! forty years of mortification and scourging have rendered these limbs stiff—but my reward—in cœlo erit meum pretium. Thou curly-headed child ! is thy soul unspotted by the world ? dost thou ever commit sin ? alas ! I fear me, thou art guilty, guilty, like all man-

kind. Stop! sirrah! thou hast reached my library—there, light the lamp, and begone.— Yet, hist! my fine boy, order my servitor, the Englishman, to attend me instantly.”

The page flew along the corridor, and Father Robert seated himself at a little round table in the centre of the apartment. No tapestry, or carpet was there; every thing spoke of austerity and mortification. Two half-broken chairs, an old cabinet which contained some dusty volumes, the writings of certain celebrated saints, and the table already mentioned, comprehended the whole furniture of the room. A stone altar, however, from before which the white linen screen had been partially drawn, was an object of some beauty: upon it stood the tapers, the host, the vase of holy water, and other insignia of the Romish worship; while, on the narrow marble steps, lay a huge scourge, formed of long shreds of leather, with which the good Father daily inflicted stripes on his own person.

Robert sat in a musing attitude; a smile curled his shrivelled lip; did that sign of satisfaction arise from the consciousness that he merited happiness in another world, by willingly enduring misery in this? Alas! no; he stroked his matted beard, and clenched his skinny hand: "Ay, ay," he muttered with a fiendish laugh—"They still believe me all I appear, poor hood-winked deluded mortals! I know that my power is not based on the good will of the nobility—but the people, the people, they believe me a saint, and would canonize me even in the flesh.—Ha! what prevents me from the vantage-ground of the high station I maintain in this kingdom, from stepping into the chair of St. Peter? I will demand a Cardinal's hat! by the bones of St. Stephen! I will have one, whether Clement be willing to grant it or not—and then at the next election—ha! ha! we shall see."

A gentle tapping without put an end to the Father's soliloquy; and the next moment, slowly and cautiously, his servitor opened the door.

As the Englishman, Forester by name, will by no means be an unimportant personage in our narrative, we will bestow on him a few words of comment. He was an astute, and a rather loquacious individual; the sun of his years, it is true, had passed its bright meridian, and he sat in the noon of sobriety and experience. Howbeit, there was a slyness in his left eye, occasioned probably by a most portentous obliquity of vision. His jaws were thin, so was his body, which, when not yielding to the impulses of locomotion, resembled, in its erectness a stake driven into the ground; his nose had a peculiarly devotional turn, for still as he bowed his head, the tip of the former organ looked up to the sky: his locks were grey, and each particular hair, comb it as he might, stood on end, so as to give him the appearance of a person in a perpetual fright. Forester, by profession, was a barber, which calling he had followed of yore in England's metropolis: there his ancestors had dwelt for many generations, and had all been like him "gentlemen of the strap."—

Young Forester had conceived a great desire to travel, and had offered his services to a gentleman of rank about to make a tour through Italy. Naples so captivated our Londoner, that when his master, Sir Guy Overton, was on the eve of quitting that city for England, the honest henchman was no where to be found : in a word, he had absconded. After various vicissitudes incidental to this our lot below, Forester, through some fortunate channel, obtained recommendation as a skilful crown-shaver to Friar Robert. The wily Englishman soon insinuated himself into the monk's favour, and had become not only his *cameriero*, and general servitor, but in many affairs, his confidant.

Forester, we have said, stood in the door-way of the Friar's library. His long bony arms dangled flat at his sides, and his stork-like neck was bent forwards, as if he waited for orders.

"How goeth the time, sirrah?"

"'Tis the third hour of the night, please your Holiness," answered the servitor.

“ Draw near, fellow.”

Forester, approached, and the Churchman looked cautiously around the room, as though he apprehended the very walls might hear, and babble of what he had to say.

“ Englishman, thou art faithful ?”

“ Can your Holiness doubt the truth of your humble slave ?”

“ If I did,” cried Robert, “ thine hours were numbered.”

“ My hours numbered, reverend Father ?” returned Forester, not exactly comprehending the monk’s meaning.

“ Yes ; utter a word to living being of aught thou dost know beyond other men respecting me, and by the saints I worship ! thou shalt be incarcerated in the Inquisition at Rome ! thine ears shall be cut off ; thy tongue rooted from thy mouth ; and thy body stretched upon the rack, till thy flesh quiver, and thy heart burst.”

The poor servitor turned deadly pale ; his teeth chattered, and, from a sympathetic twirling

of his thumbs, and a trembling of his long arms, and spindle legs, he seemed as if he were already undergoing the tortures of which the Father spoke.

“But, man, thou knowest the reward of fidelity.”—Robert, while he spoke, unlocked an iron chest which was sunk in the side of the wall, and drew from thence a bag of silver coin: he held it up, and gave the sequins a most tempting chink; Forester was fond of money; his eyes sparkled, he involuntarily moved one step forward, and his fists, relaxing, gave strong indications of an itching to clutch the bag.

“Be silent and discreet;” said Robert; “and all these shall be thine. Meantime, by way of foretaste, receive thou this.”

Forester presented his broad bony hand, and the Friar deposited thereon one sequin; then cautiously returning the envied bag to its iron abode, he thrust the key into the folds of his garment.

“My outward man yearneth for food:” said the Friar.

“ I am right glad that your Holiness is peckish,—fine stomach-searching air this at Baïæ, your reverence.”

“ Holy Madonna !” continued the churchman ; “ saving one leek, a few raisins, and two cups of cold water, I have partaken of nothing since morning-mass.”

“ I will hasten, reverend Father !” exclaimed Forester, pocketing the sequin, and tucking up the sleeves of his doublet ; “ I have a shoal of gudgeons swimming in choicest oil,—two fine sky-larks.”

“ Perdition on thy gudgeons, and thy sky-larks !” growled the Friar. “ Nay, holy Father,” said Forester in a deprecating tone ; “ I was but naming the smaller articles first. I’ve a roasted pig with sweet sauce, a fat capon, a noble tongue—”

“ A tongue thou hast of a surety !” muttered Robert ; “ howbeit thou now speakest to the purpose—away, sirrah ! dispatch !” and Forester, at the Friar’s command, vanished like a spectre from the apartment.

Robert, for a few moments, enjoyed that deep satisfaction, although tinged with impatience, which epicures experience when about to partake of a dainty meal. The Father, however, was disturbed by an unusual clamour which now came from the extremity of the gallery; and, listening at the key-hole, he heard what follows:

“Off with thee! thou imp of Satan! pollute not the relic-box with thy impious touch!”

“Nay, but master Forester,” returned a sharp voice which Robert instantly recognised to be that of the page who had conducted him to his library: “I have great zeal—a great curiosity to behold relics—whose are they? and whence do you bring them at this hour of the night?”

“Thou tantalizing fool;” exclaimed Forester. “However, if I must answer thee, they are the relics of St. Barnabas, his jaw-bone, and four of his left toes; they are just arrived from Naples for the Father’s special adoration. So now, take thyself out of the way!”

“But, good master Forester,” said the perti-

nacious urchin; "allow me just to lift this covering, and open the lid of the box, so that I may only see one of the saint's toe-nails—"

"Desist! sirrah!" vociferated Forester, whose patience was now completely exhausted: and he poured upon the page such a volley of English oaths, that the lad in a fright was heard scampering in an opposite direction along the corridor.

A minute brought our wily friend at the door of Friar Robert's library.

The precious burden which Forester bore, held indeed upon his arms, and covered like a relic-box with a rich velvet cloth, was more welcome to the churchman than all the real relics would have been from Loretto to Jerusalem. His jaws worked in anticipation; and, ever and anon, as Forester arranged the smoking viands on the table, he pressed his empty stomach with his hands.

"By the bones of San Nicolo!" he exclaimed; "honest fellow, but thou art an excellent

purveyor,—yet, wherefore, man, place seats for two !”

Forester assumed a peculiar look, which, in familiar language, may be termed ‘sly’.—“A solitary meal, holy Father,” quoth he, “can never be enjoyed—society is charming, at least we think so in England.”

“But, sirrah ;” rejoined Robert sternly, “thou dost not surely presume—”

“I, your reverence ? Oh, no ; your servitor knows his place better.”—Here his left eye, whose failing has been already alluded to, glanced most ominously towards the door ; while his right was fixed full upon the wondering friar.

“Whom then, thou rascal, is the second plate for ?” repeated Robert.

“No one, but your valued friend, the little Dominican monk,” replied Forester in a knowing whisper ; “he hath been waiting in yonder cell for your holiness these two hours. Shall I usher him hither ?”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! I understand, thou knave ! thou astute villain ! ” cried Robert with a broad grin. “ Ay, by our Ladye ! hasten—bring him to the library.”

Forester took the hint, and left the room.

“ Ha ! ha ! he ! he ! ” continued Robert alone ; “ that rascal of an Englishman doth indeed suit me to a hair—he knows and pets my humour, the dog, he doth. By San Antonio, we will have a merry night on’t ! my Rhenish, my sparkling Lachryma Christi, shall cheer my little Dominican’s spirits. For three hours at the world and its puppets I will snap my fingers—but softly, they come ! ”

Forester entered, half conducting, half walking behind a slight figure arrayed in the dark habit of a Dominican. A familiar greeting between the stranger and Robert took place, as if in that room they had frequently met before. Forester closed the door, and stood all attention to serve the wants of his master and guest. The Dominican seated himself at the supper table

opposite to him who styled himself ' Queen Joanna's spiritual adviser ; ' but the former, throwing back his cowl for coolness and comfort, discovered the face of a female !

Oh ! Robert ! character of blackness ! in comparison with whom Prince Andrea, who revelled in the halls below, was a saint. Yes, he who assumes the garb of Religion to cloak enormities ; who appears sanctified in public, but wallows privately in the slough of sin, shall receive a deeper condemnation than he who lives in open defiance of every law of God and man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

“ Who thundering comes on blackest steed,
 With slackened bit, and hoof of speed ?
 Beneath the clattering iron's sound,
 The cavern echoes wake around.”

The Giaour.

It was the fourth hour of the night, or, as we compute time in England, about eleven o'clock, when three horsemen muffled in *ferrajuóli*, or large riding cloaks, were rapidly advancing on the road that leads from *Baiæ* to the seaport town of *Pozzuolo*. The road wound near the shore, and in many places, was composed of nothing but rough hard lava, which indeed forms a large portion of the public ways in this volcanic country.

The moon was sinking behind the island of Iachia, where the towering peak of Monte San Nicolo cast a long deep shadow across the bay; the waters in every other direction, from the promontory of Miseno to Mount Posilippo, were sparkling and dancing in the silver light. The white columns of the ruined temple of Serapis, and the moss-grown arches of the baths of Nero, were dimly seen. The cry of no sea-bird was heard; the bell of no convent broke the impressive silence: a few fishermen's boats stealing on with their little white triangular sails, or plying the noiseless oar, were the only objects that indicated life.

On the land side, dark masses of wood, composed of chesnut, larch, and pine, frowned over the road. Not far distant, Averno and the Lucrine lake slept, black and stagnant, bordered with rocks and cypress trees, that dipped their funereal branches into the water. Although divested of most of their ancient horrors, the classic beholder might still fancy those lakes,

lying in the deep shadow of night, to be the region, as portrayed in the *Æneid*, of unblest spirits, and the entrance of hell.

Farther to the east, spread the Campi Phlegroei, still wild and uncultivated as when, according to mythological fable, it was the scene of the battle of the giants with the powers of Heaven. The eye could discern, in that clear atmosphere, Mount Massicus clothed with vines, and Mount Gauro, where white cottages, and the tall spires of convents peered amidst groves of olive. The snowy summits of the Apennine, glistening in the moonlight, closed the extensive prospect.

The horsemen seemed totally indifferent to the magnificence of the scenes that spread around them; scenes so calculated to awaken thoughts of an immortal past, and to fill the mind with classic enthusiasm. They looked neither to the right nor to the left, but urged on their steeds like men bent on some important project. The path widening, they rode abreast.

“Minervino,” said he who, by his air, appeared

to be the most important person of the party ;
“ of a verity, we have left Andreasso* drunk
enough. The more I see of this Hungarian, the
more I am convinced of his imbecility.”

“ Ay, noble Duke,” replied the Cavalier
addressed ; “ and shall this dull barbarian from
beyond the Alps, this sot, govern our fair
land ?”

“ Govern us ? San Marco, forbid !” exclaimed
the third horseman ; “ are we not pledged to
support our noble Duke ?”

“ True,” answered Court Minervino : “ and
I am for sending Andrea—perdition on this
horse ! what dost thou start at, Bayardo ?—I am
for sending Andrea to Heaven, or if you will, to
hell, without delay !”

“ Signóri ! Signóri !” exclaimed the Duke of
Durazzo ; “ our plans are already formed, and
require few additional words. We have drunk
the cup of blood together, and sworn, on our

* A diminutive by which Prince Andrea was called by way
of contempt.—Vide Muratori Annali, ,

knightly swords to be faithful to the death. We must see this Jew of Naples, to-night, and agree respecting the loan; your names he will require as witnesses to the compact. To-morrow, Andrea must be dispatched; then, with our money, we shall engage all the free Companions* in the country, and imputing the murder to Joanna, as I have before explained, cause her to be beheaded, or, San Marco! drive her from the kingdom. Thus, my friends, I being married, as ye know, to the heir presumptive,† shall peaceably take possession of the throne; while ye, for your fidelity, shall receive the richest fiefs in the kingdom of Naples."

"Amen!" responded the two horsemen—"long live Carlo the Third!"

* The name of Free Companions and Adventurers, was given to the foreign mercenary troops which, at this period, and for many centuries afterwards, inundated Italy. They served that republic, or that prince, who paid them the most: and scarcely a battle took place, in which those venal, but gallant gens-d'armes did not figure.

† Maria, Queen Joanna's only sister.

The Conspirators entered the little town of Pozzuolo : all was silent, save that, at intervals, the silver notes of a guitar trembled on the air, as some amorous gallant serenaded his mistress. They passed the image of Madonna and Saint, before which burned the dull, but welcome lamp. Their horses' hoofs clattered through the last street, and they entered again upon the open country.

Proceeding for a short distance along the strada Pozzuolana, the travellers reached the celebrated grotto, or excavation through the mountain, supposed to be the work of the Roman Cocceius. The moon had now set, and it was almost total darkness. Minervino knocked loudly at the door of the hut which stood at the entrance of the cavern. Presently a peasant appeared with a torch.

"Ay, ay, Signóri!" cried the *contadino*; "here I am—but one paulo first, 'an it please your Eccellenzas."

"Demandest thou money, knave, before thy

task be performed?" vociferated Durazzo—"proceed rascal!" The rustic, awed by his voice and demeanour, entered the cavern with a torch, and the horsemen followed.

The black and rugged sides of the vault; the darkness dispelled but partially by the lurid glare of the torch; the peasant, with sandalless foot, hurrying on, his black hair streaming behind him; the Conspirators, muffled in their sable cloaks; their steeds with glaring eyes and distended nostrils, snorting in wonder and fear at that strange passage, formed a picture of wildness that would have enraptured a Salvator, had he then existed.

The Cavaliers, emerging from the grotto, spurred with redoubled ardour towards Naples, and a very short time brought them to the suburb called Mergyllina, where dwelt Solomon the Jew.

CHAPTER V.

THE JEW AND HIS DUCATS.

"In torrid zones, on Lapland's wastes of snow,
In every isle that gems the boundless sea,
Ye find the plodding, cheating, thriving Jew."

A JEW! how repulsive to the many is that word! it seems to be synonymous with all that is mean, cunning, and avaricious. Yet the abject children of Abraham are despised and trampled on, only to grow wealthy and increase. They are exiled from the land of their fathers only to flourish in every corner of the globe. Circumstances have formed the apparently mean character of this extraordinary people. The wealth that others win with open hand, and by bold measures, they are compelled to gain by deceit and fraud. Are not their oppressors,

then, who cause, answerable, in a great measure, for their characteristic crimes?

The rich Jew of Mergyllina, a German by birth, sat at his ease in a small apartment of his mansion. He was enjoying a capacious bowl of hot vino Greco, in which were steeped various rich spices. His helpmate occupied a seat near him, but seemed more disposed to sleep, than to share her husband's beverage.

The manager of Solomon's mercantile affairs made his last appearance for the night.

"My worthy agent, my good Levy," said Solomon; "thou art quitting thy desk rather early to-night, I think—eh?"

"Not very early, honoured sir; 'tis nearly midnight:" replied the manager, whose countenance indicated more honesty than is usually apparent in the Israelitish physiognomy.

"Well, well, I do confess that thou art moderately diligent—what then? wert thou to be lazy, holy Abraham! love thee as I do, I would discharge thee from my service to-morrow!"

we understand each other, ay, ay. Now Levy;" the Jew softened in his manner, and spoke in a bland whisper: "the key of the warehouse."

"Here, Master;" said Levy, giving Solomon the key, which the latter deposited in his pouch under his gaberdine.

"The key of the jewel room!"

"Here, Master."

"Of the bullion box!"

"Here, Master."

"Of the money-well."

"Here, Master."

"Of the—of the—" and Solomon proceeded, until his pouch was full of keys, those preservers of his worshipped wealth. "Good night, worthy Levy;" said the Israelite; "Thou shalt have that bit of land of promise adjoining thy house, if my vessel, gone to that Ophir, Venice, make good exchange with my ducats."

Levy bowed, murmured his thanks, and with "God of Moses, bless thee, Master!" scraped out of the room.

“ Rachael !” cried Solomon to his wife ;
“ what ! sleeping ? rouse thee, I say, daughter
of Leah ! awake !”

Rachael, with an uneasy yawn, opened her
eyes. Solomon drew closer to her side, and
proffered her some of the contents of his bowl.
“ Why art thou so sad at heart, Rachael ? don’t
grieve any more seeing that Heaven imparteth
unto us no offspring. Think of king David in
Scripture—we might have had an Absalom for
a son,—I tell you we might !”

“ I would I had ten Absaloms rather than have
no child at all !” sullenly replied Rachael.

“ That is impiety, daughter of Leah ! talk
not so ; young ones would waste our substance.
Think of my Brother, Ben Jacob ; had we, like
him, three prodigal sons, holy Moses ! where
would our money-bags be now, I wonder ?”

The Hebrew placed his arm, in a conciliating
manner, around his wife’s neck ; Rachael grasped
his long beard in her hand, and giving it a loving
tweak, kissed her consort on either cheek. But

a loud knocking was now heard at the outer gate, and Solomon sprang up. "Hark!" cried the Jew; "blessed Moses! what gentiles come to disturb my house at this time of night?"

Solomon's servant, entering the room, stated that the noble Duke of Durazzo, with two friends, craved an immediate interview with his master.

"What meaneth this? what meaneth this?" muttered the Jew, striding about the room.—"Shew them in, Jacob.—Rachael, retire thou to bed—I will join thee anon.—" Solomon was left alone.—"Abraham protect me! what can the Duke want now?—ha! ha! he! he! I understand—come to discharge the monies, peradventure, which I advanced the heathen six moons ago!—it is well, very well."

Durazzo, followed by the two cavaliers described in the preceding chapter, entered the apartment.

"How dost thou bear thyself, my worthy master Solomon?" said the Duke—"My friends, Count Minervino—Signor Artus.—Many apo-

logies, master Solomon, for intruding at this unseasonable hour."

"No apologies, my good Duke, I prithee!" responded the Israelite. "Business, urgent affairs, no doubt.—Be seated, your Grace—Signóri, be seated!"

"Thou hast judged rightly;" said Durazzo; "and, as time presses, we will at once proceed to business—A small loan.—"

Durazzo hesitating, Solomon took up the word, "why, yes, noble Duke—the loan! the loan!—I am much obliged to your Grace for coming so punctually to discharge it."

"Not so fast, my worthy friend;" said Durazzo, shading his brows.—"The time stipulated for payment of the loan to which you refer, has not yet arrived. Wouldst thou have me liquidate a debt before our agreement instructs?"

"Plagues of Egypt!" cried the disappointed merchant; "then I have mistaken your Grace's meaning.—Well, noble gentile, I am all attention."

“ In a word, my excellent, my valued friend ;” observed Durazzo ; “ I am in want of another loan.”

“ Another loan ?” ejaculated Solomon, clasping his withered hands—“ Impossible ! my coffers are empty, quite empty !”

“ I would not have disturbed thee at this late hour ;” continued Durazzo, taking no heed of the Jew’s asseveration ; “ but I am in immediate want of this supply. Thou canst doubtlessly forward the ducats to my Palazzo early to-morrow.”

“ Ducats—Palazzo—early to-morrow ?” muttered the Hebrew ; “ by Aaron’s rod ! I have no ducats to lend ; my bags are empty, I say.”

“ Pshaw ! thou canst not thus deceive me. Thou dost recollect the terms of our former treaty ?”

“ Ay, do I—” quickly returned Solomon : “ and in default of payment of the monies advanced with usury, I have a claim on your Grace’s fief of Morano, to be sold to the crown,

the proceeds thereof being handed over to Solomon the son of Reuben—that is myself.”

“ Most true, my sagacious friend ; now two additional fiefs, richer than Morano, shall, in like manner, stand security, if thou wilt immediately grant the loan I require.”

“ Two more of thy fiefs ?” muttered Solomon, stroking his beard—“ two more—two more ? verily there is some reason in that. Did I say I had no ducats ?—I forgot—I think I may scrape together a few coins.—What amount may your Grace require ?”

“ A small sum will satisfy me—say fifty thousand ducats.”

“ Fifty thousand ?” exclaimed Solomon, “ dost thou call that a small sum ?—Abraham help me ! t’is a very large one, I think.”

“ Come, my worthy Hebrew, name thy usury, the principal payable at fifteen months hence, and dally no longer.”

“ Fifteen months ? long date that ;” sullenly replied the Jew.—“ Usury ? yes, there must be

usury indeed.—Well, thou art to pay on the last loan twenty ducats on the hundred. Now considering this is a second advance, at a longer date, ten more will be necessary; then, seeing the times are less steady and prosperous now, ten in addition to those.—Forty ducats on the hundred, your Grace, good silver, and fair weight, is the usury I demand.”

“Thou art a hard-fisted rascal! an unconscionable dog!” growled Durazzo; but well knowing the pertinacious and inflexible disposition of the Jew, and moreover, secretly determining never to refund one bajoco of the principal, he consented to the terms proposed.

The Hebrew merchant, in a few minutes, wrote out the agreement, which was signed by Durazzo, and readily witnessed by Minervino, and the Grand Chamberlain Artus.

“Now, my obliging friend,” said the Duke to Solomon; “thou knowest that our Palazzi are situated at a considerable distance from this suburb; it is also past midnight, and early to

morrow, the saints willing, we are bound to join a hawking-party given by Prince Andrea and the Queen, in the neighbourhood of Baiæ; therefore, if thou wilt permit these gallant Cavaliers and myself to occupy thine apartment here until break of day, we shall consider ourselves beholden."

"Certainly, most certainly;" answered the Jew; "But, alas! Signóri, I have nothing to regale your Eccellenzas withal; not even one Brundisian oyster. My clerks, by way of a treat, dined here to-day, and Beelzebub seize the locusts! they have drunk, and devoured every thing in my house."

"But this bowl, Solomon;" observed Minervino, who enjoyed the niggardly Jew's shift; "this empty bowl gives signs of recent cheer."

"The bowl?—nay;" gravely replied the Hebrew; "it did but contain a decoction of herbs manufactured by my wife for the benefit of my cold—he! he! he! Signori, excuse my sneezing fit—he! he! he!" and the Jew, wishing

the Cavaliers a good night, tucked up his gaberdine, and shuffled out of the room.

“Curses follow the avaricious knave!” muttered Durazzo. “Yet, friends, we must speak him fair; for his money will materially assist us in our undertaking.”

The Conspirators then seated themselves around the table; a lamp, shaded by an iron screen, burned in the centre, and threw its dull light on their anxious and haggard faces. The countenance of Minervino who was buoyed by the hope of aggrandizement, betrayed craft, and was flushed with the fever of expectancy; that of Charles Artus the Chamberlain, in whose bosom burned revenge, for he had been injured by Prince Andrea, wore a demon's frown and blackness. But the features of Durazzo, who aspired to the crown, spoke of loftier aspirations; yet the curled lip, the glaring eye, and black contracted brow, stamped him for one of iron soul—one who would not scruple to sacrifice a nation on the altar of his ambition, and, without

remorse, could imbrue his hands with innocent blood.

Until day dawned over Naples, these fearful men sat meditating their guilty schemes—schemes that were soon to plunge the kingdom into misery, and precipitate one unsuspecting victim from the seats of pleasure, to the solitude of the grave.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEPARTURE.

“ Oh ! hopeless love ! no balm, no peace is thine ;
Still wilt thou mourn, and wander, and repine.”

LOUIS, on parting with Queen Joanna in the royal gardens at Baiæ, had resolved to leave forthwith the kingdom of Naples. He who hopes to conquer a strong but misplaced affection, by philosophical argument, or by mere mental exertion, while the object remains in fatal beauty before his eyes, will find himself in a lamentable error. One tone, one glance of the beloved one, will melt away each icy barrier that reason would rear, and overthrow every resolution that prudence would form. Absence, change of scene and of companions, are the lover's only resources. Even these, when the mind is of a

moody, and contemplative turn, too frequently fail to produce the effect desired.

It was high noon ; the fisherman sat mending his nets beneath the projecting rocks that encircle the gulf of Gaieta. The vine-dresser, in the rich vallies of the Terra di Lavoro, rested from his toil. On the extensive plains that sweep from the Lagno river to the Tifati mountains, the flocks no longer cropt the flowery thyme, but reclined in panting groups beside the nearest fountain, or beneath the shade of some ruined arch, the design and builder of which, to the simple peasant, were alike unknown.

The meridian heat, however, was scarcely felt in that deep mass of wood, which standing in the vicinity of Cumæ, forms part of the ancient Gallinaria Pinus. Louis was riding through its shades. He was no longer in the garb of peace as when first introduced to the reader. His armour, however, was light, and adapted for travel. A hauberk of chain mail, without cuirass or pouldron, enveloped his body. Plate armour

was now becoming general, but the latter attracted in a great degree the heat of the sun, nor had it the advantage, which chain mail possessed, of yielding with ease to every motion of the body.

A light morion, to which was attached neither vizor nor crest, covered the rider's head, his ponderous helmet with its snowy plume, being suspended at his saddle-bow. His legs were protected by splints of steel, and on his feet he wore iron shoes. A long Milan sword depended from a balteus or leathern belt, which was drawn tightly around the hauberk, and fastened in front by a clasp of silver.

The cavalier's horse was slender-limbed, and unbarded : his heavy dexter, or war-horse, with steel chanfron, poitrail, and croupiere, was led by a Page behind ; that youth, likewise, carried Louis's lance, and triangular shield.

In addition to the Page just mentioned, another individual followed Prince Louis—it was his Esquire : with a steel cap somewhat resembling his lord's ; in a shirt of mail which reached to his

knee, and a long broad sword hanging at his wrist, this veteran Servitor had an imposing, rather than a gallant appearance. He was by birth a Roman; and, ever adverting to the heroes of other days, and striving to emulate their actions, he had conceived that disdain for the rest of mankind, which, even at the present hour, characterizes the inhabitants of the Eternal City. To Prince Louis, Camillo had rendered a signal service; he had saved his life; and now, although fifty years of age,* he faithfully followed him in the capacity of an Esquire.

The little party rode steadily forwards. No sound was heard but the soft tread of their horses' hoofs on the velvet turf, the shrill chirp of the cicada, or the murmur of some brook, which, frolicking across their path, was lost again amid the green matted grass, and drooping water

* Although Esquires usually obtained the honours of knighthood, at or shortly after the age of twenty-one, it was by no means an uncommon thing for them, either from attachment to their lord, or from some other motive, to grow grey headed in the service—vid. *St. Palaye*.

lilies. Overhead, a straggling sunbeam, now and then, found its way through the thick gloomy branches; and, sparkling on the dusky leaves, and playing on the cavalier's armour, seemed like joy illumining, for a moment, life's wilderness of sorrow.

“ Camillo!” exclaimed Louis to his follower.

The Roman, who, for his eminent services, was favoured with a greater degree of familiarity than usually existed between the Esquire and his lord, rode up to the side of the Prince.

“ I have not yet acquainted thee, Camillo, with the object of this our journey, or even informed thee whither we are bound.”

“ No, my Prince;” answered the descendant of Romulus, not a little piqued by the want of communication on the part of his master, for, in most cases, Louis made him his confidant:—

“ No, your Highness, no indeed!”

“ How many miles are we now from Naples, Camillo?”

“ Object—whither we are travelling—” continued the pedantic Roman, disregarding Louis’s question.—“ Here have we been marching these four hours, and still hast thou held me *in tenebris*, in darkness. The noble Africanus would not thus have kept his designs secret from his faithful Lælius.—Doth your Highness doubt my truth ?” and Camillo, though ever erect as the column of his worshipped Trajan, threw back his head with an unusual air of consequence, and offended pride.

“ Now, the Madonna assoil me ! but thou dost me wrong, my trusty Roman !” exclaimed Louis. “ There is little on earth that I would conceal from thy knowledge ; to thee I owe a debt which I shall never be able to discharge. Yet, would to Heaven ! Camillo, that, instead of rescuing me on that stormy night, thou hadst left me to perish in the waves of the Crater !*” The Roman started at the earnest, and melancholy tone

* A term frequently applied to the Bay of Naples.

of Louis. His own mortification was forgotten in the deep anxiety which he felt for his lord. He was aware of Louis's ardent passion for Queen Joanna, and, although unacquainted with the result of his last interview, doubted not that this unfortunate attachment was the cause of his present dejection, and of his sudden departure from Naples.

“ Signore mio !” he exclaimed ; “ why art thou for ever alluding to that slight duty which I once performed !—Thou owest me nothing—I am indebted to thee for every thing. Was I not driven from my native city for inculcating republican principles, when I kept a latin school at the foot of the Palatine ? and didst thou not receive the exile ? and hast thou not been my benefactor since that hour ?—But by Jupiter, Juno, and all the Deities we once worshipped in the Eternal City ! suffer not love to prey upon thy heart.—Pardon me, your Highness—she is doubtlessly a beautiful lady ; but then thou per-

ceivest thy chase is only like that of Apollo after the coy Daphne."

"What dost thou talk of?" sternly exclaimed Louis; but Camillo was a privileged person; and having himself passed the fresh and green age of romance, and bound, as he thought, to follow the great examples of Scipio and of Cato, he regarded affairs of the heart with supreme contempt.

"I mean, your Highness, that it is unworthy of a disciplined and vigorous mind to be affected by the passion of love.—Women are well adapted, after the fatigues of the camp, or the senate, to relax the mind's bow-string, or to hold dalliance with for an hour; but to be seriously moved by the caprice of a being changeable as the air of Heaven, and to be the slave of this pretty, smiling toy—out upon it! my Prince, out upon it!"

"Did these words proceed from the mouth of any other than Camillo," observed Louis, "I would couch my lance against him, and do battle

in vindication of woman whom thou hast so foully slandered. But, cynic as thou art, dost thou not imagine that a man may sincerely, and passionately love a woman, without being her slave?"

"Love and slavery, I opine," answered the Misogonist, "are twins: who ever enjoyed peace or freedom after he had taken unto himself a wife!—your Highness should peruse a book which I lately found in an old Benedictine Monastery, written by one Signor Juvenal; he would convince thee that I speak the truth.—Moreover, hath not woman been a promoter of evil, a brand of discord from the creation even until now?—who lost us Paradise?—who wrapt the City of old Priam in flames?—who caused Spain to weep for her palaces and shrines broken down and defiled by Barbarian Moors?—and Oh! Prince Louis of Taranto! who hath pierced thy noble bosom with the venom'd dagger of hopeless passion, and sent thee forth from the pleasures and magnificence of Naples, to roam dejected in an old forest, with one page and an outcast

Roman?—who but woman,—beauteous but fatal woman?”

Louis answered not: he perceived that the shrewd Camillo was possessed of his secret: he did not wish to chide him, yet could not impart to him the bitterness of his soul. He knit his brows, and dashed the rowels into his steed, as though he hoped, by a more rapid motion, to conquer, or at least veil his deep emotions.

“ Pardon me, your Highness!” exclaimed Camillo; “ if I have given utterance to more than respect warrants. But whither, I beseech thee, are we journeying ?”

“ To Rome! to Rome!” was the hurried reply.

A flush of pleasure suffused itself over Camillo's countenance. He should once more behold his native, his adored City; and, under the patronage of Louis, he should have nothing to fear from his former enemies. Besides, Rienzi was now promulgating the very principles for the espousal of which he had been banished.

The party at length emerged from the ancient forest. Before them spread an extensive plain intersected by two roads, the one leading to Venafrò, and the other to the old Volscian Town of Terracina : they pursued the latter.—Nothing could be more beautiful or magnificent than the scenery around them.—On the left rolled the blue Mediterranean dotted with barks, while the islands of Ponza and Pandataria, swelled fresh and verdurous, like masses of emerald set in the waves. Gauro towered on the right, gazing on his brother giants Mount Massicus, and Mount Ofellio, which, bending northwards, were continued by the Formian Hills, so celebrated by Horace.

Adorning this amphitheatre, and stretching along by the sea, were vine-yards, olive-groves, and green pastures watered by limpid streams.—Here stood an enclosed fountain, with its broken bason, and mouldering arch, once dedicated to some rural goddess, the presiding genius of the place. There, on a grassy mound, were seen

the half prostrate pillars of a Roman Temple, their capitals worn by time, and their shafts clasped with ivy, crying aloud to the ear of Fancy—"thus shall Earth's magnificence pass away!"—Further on, the tall spires of Convents shot up above the surrounding elms, and glistened in the sunshine; while the sweet toll of their noontide bells, sounded over this paradise, like the voice of prayer.

A contemplative calm, a hallowed feeling, stole over Louis, as he surveyed the enchanting prospect.—"What," he thought, "are the palaces, the grandest buildings reared by man, to yon majestic hills?—Can the music of the lute or organ equal the choral melody of these woods, the living murmur of these rivers?—How dim, how insignificant the lighted vault of the festive hall, to yon blue ethereal arch bending to the mountains and the ocean!—Oh! that here, far from the vortex of dissipation, the idle chase of honour, and the corroding cares and slavery that attend rank, I could pass my days!—would

that she whom I love were a peasant Maiden ! and I, yon rustic, who bending over his plough, is happier far than princes or kings !—As it is, life for me is a wilderness, and my doom is darkness.—Joanna ! in vain I fly from thee ; thou art still present to my imagination ; I still gaze on thy bewitching features, and drink the soft music of thy voice.—Cold virtue forbids *thee* to love ; and never canst thou know the intensity of my passion, or the depth of my sorrow.”

The train of Louis's thoughts was interrupted by the exclamations of Camillo, as the beautiful stream of the Garigliano, the ancient Liris, burst upon their view : pure and azure it looked as the sky, as it rolled its tribute to the Mediterranean ; it was fringed with myrtle and laurel-trees, among which peeped the Shepherd's cabin, and the Anchorite's peaceful cell. Farther up, where it wandered between lofty hills, Monasteries, and feudal towers, reflected themselves in its waters.

Our little party, having suffered their steeds

to drink, crossed the ancient Bridge, which, being a striking relic of Roman architecture, was, in Camillo's eyes, the most interesting object in the scene.

The sun was now declining, to which luminary the prudent Camillo called his lord's attention; he also pointed significantly at the weary page.

"Not that I feel fatigue, your Highness," said he; "for, like stout CEmilius of old, I can sit my steed from day-dawn to mid-night; and thou, I warrant, despite thy hauberk of iron, couldst do the same. But the page must be sore distressed, and the bowels of the horses also—up, Bucephalus! do not stumble—are hollow as loosened drums.—Seest thou yon mansion, your Highness, with the smoke issuing from the corner tower?"

"I do," replied Louis; "and thitherward let us prick; for, certes, Camillo, thou hast spoken truly respecting the poor page.—Ho! Sebastiano, forward my boy! thou shalt soon be freed from thy burden, the lance and shield, and regale thyself withal."

A few minutes brought them before the outer gate of a venerable-looking pile. It was a castellated building inhabited by Monks ; for the good Fathers, in those days of general aggression, and ill-administered law, were not unfrequently obliged to fortify themselves within their Monasteries. The name of the stranger being announced, the Superior hospitably opened his gates, and our travellers were invited to dismount, and refresh themselves in the hall.

Here, for the present, we take our leave of Louis, who had determined, after a few hours' rest, to continue his journey towards Rome. He still hoped amidst the sublime scenes, and magnificence of the Eternal City, to abstract his thoughts from their one engrossing object, and to conquer the fruitless, the fatal passion which harrowed up his soul.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ATTACK.

Litus beatæ aureum Veneris,
 Baiæ superbæ blanda dona naturæ.

Martial.

WE must go back a few hours in our narrative.

The Conspirators, Durazzo, Minervino, and Charles Artus, at dawn of day quitted the house of Solomon the Jew, and proceeded towards Baiæ, in order to join the hawking party of Prince Andrea and the Queen.

They had reached a narrow defile in the neighbourhood of Pozzuolo, where cypresses cast a funereal gloom, and cascades tumbled with hoarse murmurs down the precipitous rocks.—The Duke of Durazzo suddenly stopped, and blowing a faint blast upon a horn, in a few minutes, a

gigantic man, arrayed in the garb of a robber of the period, issued from a ruin that had the appearance of having been formerly a Roman tomb.

The Conspirators and this individual seemed perfectly to understand each other; in truth, the meeting had been by appointment. Durazzo addressed the man in a low voice :

“ Di Loria, in all our transactions, thou hast hitherto proved thyself worthy of trust. Now, mark me; thou wilt keep *our* names a profound secret from thy men. Inform them it is a deed which Queen Joanna devoutly prays them to execute, and this I again solemnly declare to thee is the fact. Our beloved Sovereign engages through us to pay you a large amount, as soon as her hated Husband, the imbecile Andrea, is dispatched.”

The robber, who held his feathered hat in his hand, nodded assent.

“ The Royal party will pass near the lake Averno, for so Joanna has purposely arranged.

There be thy ambuscade. Thou rememberest the speech which thou must make, setting forth thy commission as given thee by the people of Naples?"

The man, who firmly believed that Durazzo was indeed the Queen's deputy in the transaction, answered in the affirmative.—The Duke then placed into his hand a purse of gold, and reminding him of the large sum he was to receive, should Joanna's plan succeed, resumed his journey with his traitorous companions.

* * * * *

The Conspirators arrived at Baiæ just as the Royal pleasure-party was setting out on their hawking expedition. The morning was bright and serene; a fresh salubrious breeze blew from the sea; and, from the elements, at least, it might be augured that the day would be one of unmixed pleasure.

Joanna, and her young companion Amalia, rode side by side, on milk-white palfreys; the former, as became her rank, was magnificently

arrayed. A crimson hood, seeded with pearls, was drawn partially over her head. Her riding-habit of violet-coloured silk bordered with roses, was fastened in front by gold clasps set with amethysts. To these were added two articles considered, at the period, most luxurious and costly, although for a lady to wear such on horseback, in the present day, would seem ridiculous enough—an Indian shawl, and gold-embroidered gloves. The Crusaders had introduced the former from the East; and so uncommon were the latter even two centuries afterwards, that, it was said, our own Queen Elizabeth was presented with a similar pair of gloves by the Earl of Oxford, as a ‘valuable curiosity from foreign parts.’

Amalia, the dark-haired, the slender, and beautiful, was arrayed as gracefully, if not with so much splendour as Joanna. Her beauty, however, was of a different character from the Queen’s. Joanna’s features expressed a contemplative serenity, a chastened dignity of soul.

Amalia's large and sparkling eyes were full of mirth and love ; and her brow bore the soft seal of sensibility, rather than the impress of pride. Joanna, in her demeanour, might have appeared to some cold and reserved ; Amalia was all warmth and vivacity. The former seldom smiled, and her countenance, though strikingly handsome, had a tinge of melancholy : but satisfaction and delight, as if the mere sense of existence alone were a blessing, dimpled the cheek, and played around the ruby lip of Louis's Sister.

Such were the ladies who now reined their white jennets ; the graceful animals pawed the ground, and arched their shining necks, as if proud of the burdens which they bore, and of the little silver bells which hung tinkling at their flowing manes.

Prince Andrea followed on a black Arabian gaily caparisoned. On one side of him rode his Hungarian tutor, Nicola ; and on the other the High Constable of the kingdom. Friar Robert never accompanied the Prince in his field-sports ;

he, good man, was at home counting his ayes, and, with the assistance of honest Forester, unmercifully scourging his own bare back.

Many of the Cavaliers who, on the preceding evening, partook of Andrea's banquet, had departed for Naples on state affairs. Those that now followed him were the Count di Tralizzo, Boccaccio, Hugh de Baux, and several Hungarian gentlemen, including Durazzo and his friends who had just come up.

A train of pages and falconers, with hawks on their wrists, composed the rear.

The party pressed forwards, full of spirits and good humour. The scene of the sport,—and, with the arrangement, we have perceived Durazzo had made himself acquainted,—was to be along by the Mare morto, the ancient Campi Elysii, and thence by the Lake of Averno home.—They crossed heath and dingle, and now the plains so celebrated by Virgil, covered with cypresses, mouldering temples, and tombs, spread before them. The spot, which would have awakened

a thousand remembrances in the bosom of the classic beholder, had little influence, with the exception of two or three individuals, on any present. They only looked out, where by pond or rushy stream, might lurk heron or crane.

It was not long before game was discovered : in the middle of a brook, his head bent down, intent on the minnows that might be sporting around him, stood at a short distance a tall heron.

The party halted ; the Falconers stepped forwards, and unhooding their birds, which were of the true *falco gentilis* breed, and shouting aloud, the heron began to mount.

“ Not too quick, Falconers ! allow him time for fair sweep : ” cried Prince Andrea.

“ By our Ladye ! a noble fellow—full five feet between his extremities ! ” roared the High Constable.

The doomed bird, as if aware by instinct of what was going forwards, having gained a sufficient altitude, careered away before the wind.

“ Fly them !” cried Andrea.—In an instant the men slipped the leather jesses from the legs of their falcons, and onward like lightning darted the impatient birds.

The heron wheeled around to ascertain in what direction his enemies were approaching ; but the well-trained falcons soared high above him, and, “ waiting on,” prepared to “ stoop.”—Down came one like a shooting star, aiming at the head of the huge quarry ; but the wary heron eluded the stroke by suddenly turning his long neck under his wing. Another followed up the attack, but here the old marsh-bird had the advantage, for, raising his sharp beak as his enemy stooped, he pierced him through the bosom, and the falcon, with a sharp cry, fell lifeless to the ground.

“ Perdition on the fellow !” cried Andrea ; “ he has killed my favourite Leda.”

The remaining and largest hawks now came on together ; the heron evinced no fear, but continued almost stationary, flapping his broad

extended wings. But his efforts to receive his enemies on his beak, or to shield his head, were unavailing: they struck him; or, to use the language of falconry, he was "bound." In a minute the falcons deprived him of his eyes, and the huge bird fell fluttering round and round through the air, and splashed into the stream beneath.

The royal party spurred to the spot, while acclamations and shouts evinced how highly they enjoyed the sport.

We forbear giving a further description of the diversions of the morning. Some hours passed; they had arrived in the neighbourhood of the lake Averno, and were contemplating from its southern bank that famous sheet of water, when suddenly an arrow whistled close by Prince Andrea; it grazed his ear, but did no further injury. All started; but whence the shaft came they were totally ignorant. The wood was too remote for an arrow to reach them from that quarter; but about fifty paces towards their left stood the ruins of a temple dedicated in ancient

days to Proserpine. They had no time for consideration ; ere they had communicated to each other their apprehensions, a multitude of men, armed with pikes and swords, issued from beneath the low arch of the ruin. At the same time, another party of a similar appearance, was seen advancing in an opposite direction.

Great were the surprise and consternation of Prince Andrea and his train, thus suddenly surrounded by these savage-looking men.—It was evident their intent was hostile, and that Andrea was the object of their resentment. True, the royal party was thirty in number, but of these twelve only were armed with swords, the rest being ladies, pages, and falconers. Moreover, the malcontents, assassins, or whatever they were, had steel caps and jackets, while the courtiers were arrayed in their thin sporting doublets. Nevertheless, they formed around the Prince, and placing the ladies in the centre, as the situation least exposed to danger, prepared to receive their mysterious enemies.

The ruffians advanced with levelled pikes, and drawn swords. He who seemed to be their leader, the identical man with whom Durazzo had held the conference in the defile near Pozzuolo, checked their progress for a minute, and cried aloud :—

“ In the name of the citizens of Naples, and all those who sorely grieve at the ill government of this realm, and are impatient at the usurped sway of the base Hungarians, we call upon ye, fair sirs, to deliver into our hands the weak and vile Prince Andreasso. We make this proposal from a wish to spare effusion of blood. But, look ye, Signóri, if ye refuse to do our bidding, then, our Ladye assoil your souls ! we will kill ye all even to a man.”

The Courtiers were astonished and thunder-struck at the audacity of the speaker, and Andrea shook through every joint and limb. They were convinced that the attack had been preconcerted by some disaffected baron, or traitorous citizen previously acquainted with their intended route.

To what measure could they resort? many present, it is certain, were faithful to Prince Andrea; and even those who, we know, had employed the ruffians, were obliged from motives of policy, to counterfeit rage and indignation.

All, therefore, unanimously agreed to defend Andrea to the last. The pages were ordered to stand close around the Queen and her female companions; the falconers to grasp their sporting knives; while the courtiers, reining in their steeds, and drawing their long swords, formed the outer circle of the little body.

The ruffians, perceiving that the royal party refused to deliver up Prince Andrea, and enraged at their determined aspect, rushed towards them furiously shouting :—" Down with the Hungarians! long life to Queen Joanna! perish her unworthy consort! death, death to Andreasso!"

The horses of the Italian nobles did not swerve, but boldly presented their unbarbed bosoms to the rushing pikes. The Duke of Durazzo, however, unaccountably broke his sword, during the first

onset ; and the Chamberlain Artus, although no one witnessed the blow, was unhorsed. On the other hand, the faithful High Constable, Boccaccio, and even the Prince himself, fought valiantly. They dispatched six of the villains with their own hands, while many were trampled to death by their curvetting steeds.

Yet what could a dozen swords achieve against a host ? for the assailants now amounted to at least a hundred men. Still the cry was—
“ Death to Andreasso ! the Queen shall have a nobler mate ! kill, kill Andreasso ! ”

The courtiers were hemmed in—borne back—some of them were wounded, while the greater number of the falconers and pages were slain.

Thus stood the fearful skirmish ; it was indeed a deplorable conclusion to their peaceful sport of hawking. The fate of the Prince and the nobles appeared inevitable. Even the Duke of Durazzo, the mover and instigator of the whole, feigned the utmost alarm, while the pages could

scarcely support the shrieking ladies on their steeds.

Hark! a bugle rings from the neighbouring valley! the despairing Cavaliers eagerly cast their eyes in the direction of the sound. Again hill and dell echoed the martial blast. It was a troop of horsemen, and they were rapidly approaching to the assistance of the oppressed party.

Andrea, and those of his Courtiers even who were unfaithful, shouted, and the advancing horsemen answered with loud cheers.—They were English Adventurers—those bold troopers in a foreign land, who, although they fought for any State that had gold to offer them, and too frequently spread around them devastation and terror, were distinguished at times by actions of gallantry and honour. Passing in the neighbourhood, they had recognised the Royal party, and, at the same time, had perceived their perilous situation.

On, on, the horsemen spurred!—it was an

exciting spectacle—their pennons were streaming, their lances were in the rest—their cause was a high, a glorious one—they were coming to trample down villains and traitors, and to save a beautiful Queen, and her Consort from destruction.

“ Prince Andrea to the rescue ! a Courtenay ! a Courtenay ! ” swelled on the air, as the fiery Adventurers ascended the hill. A minute more, their visors were closed, their lances were flung forwards, and they charged the band of miscreants.

The shock of these skilful soldiers could not be resisted by the robbers of the Terra di Lavoro. In vain they swayed their swords, in vain they levelled their pikes. A few desperate spirits, with their gigantic leader, made a momentary stand, but the former were soon hewn down, and the latter engaging the Condottiero, or Captain himself, fell by the hand of the brave Englishman. Di Loria did not die before he had showered curses upon Durazzo ; yet the circumstance excited no suspicion, for the Royal

Duke might be considered one of his chief enemies ; more especially as Durazzo, with an appearance of great indignation, plunged his dagger into the heart of the dying robber.

So speedy had been the discomfiture of the marauders, who now strove to save themselves by a precipitate flight, that Andrea and his Courtiers were scarcely able to credit the scene they beheld. Three persons only felt chagrin at the failure of their plan for dispatching the Prince ; but they consoled themselves with the hope of future success. Even the past skirmish, although its object had been defeated, might serve to excite suspicion against Joanna ; for all the surviving robbers, they well knew, imagined that they had been employed by the Queen. Durazzo's calculations, it must be remembered, ever tended to one point ; if Andrea were assassinated, and the Queen condemned for the murder, he and his wife Maria, by right of succession, would sit on the throne of Naples.

But where was the gallant English Captain,

Walter Courtenay ? he returned with his troop from the pursuit of the miscreants ; the Neapolitan nobles crowded around him, and the Queen and Amalia came forward to express their gratitude.

The Englishman was a tall athletic man ; he was sheathed from head to heel, in plate armour ; on his surcoat was emblazoned a stag in a field of gold, and his polished cuirass bore the dints of many a former conflict.

The High Constable wrung his gauntleted hand, and Prince Andrea hung around his neck a massy chain of gold. The soldier's visor was closed, but when the Queen and Amalia advanced, he was bound in courtesy to raise it. Courtenay, then, lifted his eventaille ; he even unclasped the brace of silver which, passing under his chin, confined his helmet. With bare head, the Captain bowed low and gracefully to the Queen and her beautiful companion. He was in the proud vigour of manhood. All present admired the elegance of his manner, as well as the classic

contour, and noble expression of his countenance. The blushing Amalia alone shrank back, and hastily covered her face with her veil.

But the English Captain now turned deadly pale; the armour beneath his surcoat streamed with blood, a circumstance unperceived before by the Neapolitan Nobles. He had exerted his utmost in the action of gallantry just recited. He dropped his plumed head-piece—staggered a few paces, and sank senseless upon the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENGLISH CAPTAIN.

“ For the love of God a Surgeon !”

Shakspeare's Twelfth Night.

“ PLACE him on that couch.—Now gently, fair friends, gently unlace his armour.—Open yon window, Page; the cool air will revive him.—Thou hast sent, De Baux, to Pozzuolo, for the skilful Chirurgeon: would to Heaven he were arrived! but, in the mean time, let us perform all that lies in our power for the restoration of the wounded soldier.”

Thus spoke Queen Joanna, as the troopers bore Walter Courtenay upon a litter into the hall of the Villa at Baiæ. He was in truth, severely wounded; but his exhaustion,

it was evident, proceeded from loss of blood. Several Courtiers present exhibited dints and scars, tokens of the recent fight; but none like him were disabled. His armour was soon removed, and he remained in his gambeson and silk hose.

The gratitude which we feel towards a fellow being for the performance of a beneficial action, is rendered doubly deep when he happens to be a sufferer thereby. This observation, however, relates to noble and generous minds. Selfish and calculating men reckon only to the extent of the favour, without considering the means or loss of him who has conferred it.

The sense of gratitude, then, in Joanna's bosom, towards him who had saved her husband's life at the cost, perhaps, of his own, was as lively as her spirit was noble. She gazed with the deepest anxiety on the pallid countenance of Courtenay. His eyes were closed; his hands drooped listlessly, and his breathing was scarcely perceivable. Amalia hung trem-

blingly on the Queen's arm. The youthful Maiden's face was now pale; and now, as she glanced timidly towards the wounded soldier, her cheek was suffused with the heart's eloquent blood, and a tear perhaps of pity, perhaps of first awakened love, glistened on her dark lashes.

Every one in the hall, not excepting the Conspirators themselves, who acted from prudential motives, evinced the utmost interest in Courtenay's fate. The High Constable endeavoured to stanch the blood which still flowed from his wound. Charles Artus chafed his hands; and Durazzo, wishing him the while for thwarting his plans, in the bottomless pit, poured into his mouth some strong cordial.

Prince Andrea, however, stood aloof, walking sedately up and down. Like all craven-hearted men, while his own life was in danger, he little regarded the doom which menaced another.—
“That English Captain,” he thought to himself,
“has for the present averted the blow; but may

not the assassin's knife reach me to-morrow ?— who is the assassin ?—by the fiends ! who hath promoted this hellish deed ?—” He ground his teeth, and clenched his fists—“ I am surrounded by traitors—never shall I reign in safety, until every office is filled by Hungarians—Oh ! for a dagger to stab every Neapolitan baron !”

The faint tinkle of a bell was now heard proceeding from a distant corridor ; and the Ushers announced that Father Robert was approaching. The Friar had been informed that a brave Cavalier was dying in the hall ; and although, in the very act of performing penance, kneeling with his back bare on which Forester heavily laid the lash, the holy man girt up his loins, and was fast advancing to give ghostly comfort to the sufferer, and administer extreme unction.

All made way for the bare-footed Friar ; he was preceded by a boy clad in white vestments, bearing an ivory cross, and a cruse of oil. Two other youths, in similar attire, followed him, with lighted tapers in their hands. At a respectful

distance, also appeared Forester ; he was anxious to catch a glimpse of the wounded Captain, his countryman, yet feared, at the same time, he might recognise one to whom formerly he had played the knave.

“ My son ! ” began Friar Robert, in a deep and solemn tone, waving back those who intruded too near : “ If thou hast any weighty sin to confess, make no delay, for the sands of thy life are nearly exhausted ; and thy soul, it is evident, will soon quit its tabernacle of clay.”

Courtenay languidly opened his eyes : he did not repulse the churchman, for rarely, in those days of Catholic zeal, was the high-born soldier found without a sense of religion, and a reverence for divine things.

“ Look, oh, my son ! ” continued the Friar, “ on this blessed cross ; despond not on account of thy transgressions—*Omnibus est misericordia*, mercy reacheth unto all.—Confess, my son ! confess !—yonder unholy men cannot overhear thee.”

Courtenay clasped his hands, and appeared in silent prayer.

“ Even I, my son, who have kept aloof from the vanities of the world ; who have never looked upon the tempter, woman ; who have lived for forty years on little besides roots and water ; who have daily with stripes lacerated my own flesh ; even I have sins to answer for.—Tell me, hast thou been a reveller in wine and strong drink ? hast thou robbed another of his goods ? and, more than all, hast thou ever spoken disrespectfully of the Church, or injured her Priesthood ? ”

The Cavalier groaned, but was unable to speak.

“ Thou mayest have committed all these crimes : and from that heavy groan, I conclude it is the case. Yet, oh, my son ! if thou art penitent, I will absolve thee ; and, by the aid of the blessed Saints, thou shall not remain long in purgatory.”

“ I thank thee, holy Father ! ” faintly sighed Courtenay.

“ Yes, for six long months, twelve candles shall burn before the shrine of the Madonna del Delore, and masses shall be said in city and town for the weal of thy soul.”

The soldier faintly murmured “ Amen !” placed his hand upon his heart, and relapsed into a state of complete insensibility.

“ He is dying !” ejaculated the Friar.

“ Dying ?” cried Joanna, who overheard the Father’s last words. She clasped her hands, while Amalia stood by her side, pale and motionless as a statue.

“ Boy, give me the holy oil ;” continued Robert ; “ that I may anoint the expiring sinner.—Advance the tapers, and raise the cross over him !”

The Father commenced that last and solemn rite enjoined by the Romish Church—extreme unction. But now a movement was made in the vestibule without, and cries of the “ Chirurgeon !” were heard.

The man of physic indeed made his appearance.

He approached his patient with an air of extreme gravity and self-importance. He was a Jew of German descent, a brother of our friend Solomon of Naples ; and as the latter was renowned for his wealth, so had the former become famous for his skill in the medical art. The Jews, in the age of which we write, were celebrated for their knowledge of Pharmacy ; and they possessed, say old chroniclers, many secrets connected with medicinal herbs, and curious drugs for the healing of wounds, which they never revealed to the Christians.

Ben Jacob, for such was the name of the Chirurgeon, stood by the side of Friar Robert, as grave as he, and as full of self-consequence.

“ Oh ! Friar ! whom heathens call holy ; ” exclaimed Ben Jacob, speaking more boldly than members of his despised race in general dared to do—“ Suspend thine anointing one little moment that I may examine the dying man.”

The Father drew back with his cruse of oil,

malignantly scowling on him who presumed to interrupt him in his duty.

The doctor solemnly placed on the huge bridge of his nose, a pair of those instruments which had just been invented by Spina, of Pisa, and afterwards denominated spectacles; then tucking up his gaberdine, he felt the soldier's wrist, and the pulsations of his heart.

"None here;" he murmured in a tone loud enough to be heard by those around. "Holy Moses! no stroke here either: all is still.—Goliah of Gath was not more surely slain by the strippling David. Illustrious Gentiles! it is my mournful duty to inform ye that the brave soldier is dead!"

"Dead?" exclaimed all in a breath.

"Why marvel ye?" continued the Jew; "he is dead, I say—quite dead."

Exclamations of sorrow arose through the hall; many mourned for the unfortunate Englishman; but none felt so deeply, so sincerely, as Joanna and her fair companion. In rescuing them, he

had lost his own life ; and so handsome, so young, so brave,—Joanna sighed, and Amalia turned away to conceal her tears.

“ Let us remove the body :” said the High Constable, as he advanced with Raimond de Banx.—“ Our noble preserver shall have, at least, a befitting interment.”

“ Not so fast, I do beseech ye !” exclaimed Ben Jacob, thrusting himself between them, and the prostrate soldier. “ Although I am no Elisha to revive the dead, yet peradventure the spirit lingering like a sun-beam in the air, or as the quivering flame of yonder taper about to go out ; the spirit may, I say, by my art and simples, return to the body it had all but forsaken. Yes, Signóri, we will try ; and let us call on no saints, but the God of Moses to assist us !”

The quaint old doctor, hereupon, took a small flask from his pouch, and, emptying a little of the white powder which it contained, into his palm, commenced briskly rubbing his hands. A powerful odour was produced, which caused several around him to sneeze. He then placed

both his hands to the soldier's nostrils, and ordered one of the boys in white vestments to apply cold water to his forehead.

Whether Ben Jacob really believed that Courtenay was no more, when he announced the fact : or whether he had stated the worst in order to advance his fame should he perform a cure, we pretend not to decide. But certain it was that the pungent powder seemed likely to revive the patient, or, according to Ben Jacob, to recall the spirit which might still linger upon the threshold of mortality.

“ More water ! my boy ! ” cried the Chirurgeon ;
“ spare not the cheap water—more powder too ;—so, it is very strong.—Ah ! did he not sigh ? yes, methinks, his heart begins to beat.—Holy Abraham ! life is returning ! ”

“ He lives ! the Captain lives ! ” echoed from all around.

“ Blessed be the Chirurgeon ! ” cried the High Constable : and “ glory to God ! ” was responded by the delighted Joanna, and Amalia.

Courtenay, in truth, had suffered only a long

and severe fainting fit, caused by loss of blood.— Ben Jacob, as we have already hinted, might have been acquainted with his real state at the beginning, and had resorted to means sufficiently simple to arouse him from that syncope which so much resembled death.

The English Captain sat up, and a faint smile brightened his countenance, as he viewed so many anxious faces bent upon him; but his eye sought one fair being among the crowd—it rested upon Amalia.

“ Now, holy Father !” cried the Jew exultingly; “ we will dispense with your crosses, your oils, and your candles—all very well in their place.—I did confess, illustrious Gentiles ! that I was no Elisha ; yet, by my powder the taper of life once more is illumed. Yes, this powder is what Galen and Hippocrates themselves never discovered : its virtue is most prodigious, as ye all this day have witnessed ; I made it under the configuration of certain planets ; and oh ! believe me, it is nearly as efficacious as that

brazen serpent which Moses once set up in the Wilderness to heal our afflicted people."

"Yes, good Ben Jacob," said the High Constable, who, tinctured with the credulity of the times, almost believed what the Jew asserted. "Thy powder is worth all the ducats that thy rich brother Solomon possesses."

"It is indeed, most sage gentile.—Solomon may build ships, and fill his coffers with gold—all very well—but mine is a more noble occupation; I save lives; and were all his bezants melted into one golden calf, I would not give in exchange for it this most wonderful powder."

In descanting upon the virtues of his panacea, the renowned physician had almost forgotten his patient; but now turning to Courtenay, he carefully bound up his wound, and issued his directions.

"He must be removed, my honoured friends, to a quiet room: let no brother soldier talk to him about battles, since such discourse would

excite his spirit, which must be kept very calm. I will in a brief time, send him some lotions and simples; and now, your high Eccellenzas—" he said, bowing to Andrea and the Queen; " and ye, illustrious Gentiles! farewell! and the God of Moses bless ye!"

The doctor took his spectacles from his nose, grasped his staff, and quitted the hall. He was followed by the blessings of many in that royal Villa; for Ben Jacob, unlike his selfish and avaricious brother Solomon, possessed great benevolence of heart, and was respected and beloved by all who knew him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROYAL BOUDOIR.

“ Too soon in woman Love his power betrays,
The pensive brow, the restless tearful gaze;
The absent air, the frequent bursting sigh,
The blush revealing what the lips deny.”

A FEW days had elapsed from the date of the scene we have just described. Queen Joanna and Amalia were alone in their camerella. The little room was hung with superb tapestry, and tastefully garnished. Here, on a white marble slab, lay several scrolls of parchment, on which were copied, in the illuminated manner of the period, some of the latest sonnets of Petrarch : there, in a gold cage, covered with roses, like a living rose itself, sang a beautifully plumaged bird from the spicy groves of India ; while in a recess

were seen an embroidery frame, and a pearl-inlaid cithern or lute.

The ladies sat at a table covered with cloth of gold. Before Amalia was placed a bunch of flowers, the colours of which she was teaching her paper to emulate. Joanna was engaged in perusing her favourite volume, Dante's *Divina Commedia*.

A smile was diffused over Amalia's sunny features, as she bent her ivory neck in the attitude required by painting. Like her flowers she was gay, blooming, innocent: one of those fair creatures who seem formed for prosperity and joy; who feeling their own hearts light and guileless, fancy others must be the same; who reflect with no pain on the past, and anticipate the future with no anxiety; and to whom sorrow and care are known only in words.

Joanna's countenance indicated widely dissimilar thoughts, and a far different disposition. On her brow was portrayed dignity approximating to pride, and her features expressed a

more than feminine depth of thought. One snowy hand lay listlessly on the table, and the other, as it supported her head, was concealed amidst her golden ringlets. Now she appeared wholly wrapt in the perusal of the volume above mentioned ; now from the tear that trembled on her dark eye lash, and from her deeply-drawn sigh, her thoughts seemed wandering far away. Yes, much as she endeavoured to conquer her lingering passion ; much as she strove to listen to the dictates of virtue and prudence, Joanna was unable to blot out from her mind the image of Louis.

“ Where is he now ? ” she thought ; “ Perhaps he is alone—sorrowful ; perhaps he is upbraiding me for having banished him from my presence. Have I acted harshly towards him ?—no, too fondly pleading heart, be still ! my vow is registered in Heaven : I am the wife of another ! ” She closed the volume, and sank back into her chair, while fresh tears sprang to her eyes.

Was Love designed to promote man's welfare

and happiness ? or is it implanted in our bosoms as a scourge for our crimes ? raising so frequently hopes that can never be realized, wishes that can never be gratified. Oh ! Love ! to some what a nectareous stream thou art ! to others what a fountain of bitterness ! Now thou appearest in sunshine and smiles ; now in gloom and tears. In thy hands are the cups of gratification and disappointment. With thee there is no moral medium ; thou dost bring us supreme bliss, or dost render us utterly wretched.

“ My dearest Joanna,” said Amalia, for the Queen had desired her companion, when in private, to address her by her plain name ; “ Wherefore are you so dejected, and ill at ease ? your husband has escaped unwounded from the late disaster, and is blithe as ever : the English Captain, also, is fast recovering.”

Joanna was silent.

“ I do believe,” continued the frank girl, as she stooped to prosecute her painting ; “ I do believe that the books over which you so fondly pore, imbue your mind with sadness. For my

part, although my good father engaged Paduan doctors to teach me the mysteries of the schools, and to make me, as he thought, another Novella*, I confess I am no learned clerk : nor do I wish—the Madonna help me ! I have miscoloured this flower—do I wish to become deeply versed in worldly wisdom, if the result must be constant reflection, and moody sorrow.”

“ Thou dost mistake altogether the cause of my dejection :” said the Queen.

“ Ah ! do you grieve for—” Amalia checked herself, and arising from her seat, threw her arms around Joanna’s neck.—“ Yes, I feel for you—I sympathise with you—I do believe that you love each other sincerely ; but wherefore did you send him away ?”

“ Asks Amalia such a question ? hath not fate placed an insurmountable barrier between us ?”

“ This may be,” replied Louis’s sister ; “ yet methinks, it would be some consolation to you

* The Aspasia of modern Italy : she delivered lectures in the University of Bologna, on philosophy and jurisprudence.

both, to meet at times—to see each other—to be near each other.”

“ Alas! my poor girl! thou art not yet acquainted with the heartless, the calumniating world.”

“ For example; Petrarch and Laura in the north;” continued Amalia; “ whose names are so celebrated; their love much resembles yours and my brother’s: yet they have not bidden adieu to each other—the world asperses not Laura’s fame; nor is her husband, it is said, averse to their platonic attachment.”

“ But thou dost forget, sweet girl, that Petrarch is a poet, and poets have ever been privileged beings from Homer downwards. He sings Laura’s praises in verses that will never die—just like our Boccaccio here, who daily pours forth an impassioned sonnet to Maria of Sicily. But Louis’s pen is his sword, and his lyre the trumpet of war. Besides, my situation as Queen of this realm, forbids my encouraging such a platonic lover. I am exposed to all eyes, and

liable to the censure of every tongue. No, whatever may be my sufferings, I am fully persuaded that both Louis and myself have acted rightly in parting for ever."

"I admire your strength of mind, and virtuous principles," said Amalia, as she resumed her occupation; "Heaven will reward you for your upright conduct. At the worst you have but loved in vain; and strange as my opinion may seem, I will say that it is better to love hopelessly, than never to love at all."

"Dost thou think so, girl? I wish thou couldst prove the truth of thy assertion."

"Although I have read little, I have thought much, dear Joanna;—how cold, how stagnant, then, is that lot which is unwarmed, and unbreathed upon by love! and such a lot is mine. I love, it is true, all my relations and friends, but have never known that glowing passion which poets describe, and whose flame is kindled by one object alone. Oh! how often have I wished that one of the many gay cavaliers that

frequent our Court, could thaw the ice of my bosom. But no, the pleasure or pain of love seems to be denied to my nature."

"Be not too confident of this:" observed Joanna, who was glad to lighten for a moment her own sorrows, by rallying her friend. "What thinkest thou of our gallant preserver the English Captain? were he a prince, and to kneel at thy feet, would the ice, thou dost talk of, thaw, sweet one?"

Amalia was silent and confused; she commenced painting with great rapidity, while the glowing crimson of her bosom was seen plainly through the veil of gauze that floated like a silvery cloud around her.

"So, Amalia, thou wilt not answer.—Surely if thy heart were in the cold condition thou dost say, thou mightst freely deliver thy opinion of Walter Courtenay."

"And I *will* deliver it;" said Amalia in a tone of the utmost indifference, such as ladies, similarly situated, are wont to affect, even while their hearts throb, and their cheeks burn.

“ First, Courtenay is clumsily tall—too much of a giant—our Ladye forgive me ! what a daub I have made of this sheet!—I admire not his complexion, nor the Saracen-like fierceness of his eyes—Joanna, we will have no more paints from Padua, the colours are most inferior.—Then for the Captain's manners, he appears to be as unpolished as he is conceited ; and judging from the harsh expression of his features, I should say that his temper must be intolerably bad.”

“ Thy picture of our preserver, Amalia, is indeed very repulsive.”

“ But it is a just one, Joanna ; say, is it not ?”

The Queen, though young herself, knew woman's heart too well to be mistaken with regard to the situation of Amalia's. She also possessed sufficient tact to compel her friend to make a full confession.

“ I will believe, girl,” she gravely said, “ that thou hast spoken the truth respecting this English Soldier. He is, indeed, awkwardly tall ; his eyes

are savagely fierce ; his air is insufferably conceited ; and more than all, in his evil visage, I read a most malicious temper."

Amalia dropped her brush, and started from her seat ; her cheek was suffused with a deeper crimson, and her eye almost flashed with passion. Joanna's words were but an echo of her own ; but while she considered herself privileged to slander Courtenay, the hearing of another use similar expressions, roused her anger to the highest pitch.

" And do you speak thus, Joanna, of our preserver ?" she cried. " Common gratitude should prompt different language.—Did I say aught in depreciation of the gallant soldier ? then I knew not what I uttered.—But you have vilely wronged him ; and here will I defend him against your calumnious assertions."

Joanna smiled at the warmth of her friend ; and Amalia, suddenly recollecting how unconsciously she had betrayed the interest which she really felt for Courtenay, sank into her

chair, with pouting lips, half ready to curl into laughter.

“ He does not require thy defence, pretty one ;” said the Queen ; “ and need I confess that I spoke only in jest ? But beware of thy young heart, for I plainly perceive that thou hast a gentle *penchant* for Walter Courtenay.”

Amalia burst into a loud laugh, tearing a rose which she held in her hand to pieces.

“ Alas ! dear girl,” continued Joanna, “ however gallant and meritorious the English Captain may be, I fear me he is no mate for a princess of Naples.”

“ Silence ! silence ! Queen Joanna.”

“ But should he,—and it is not impossible,—prove a Prince in disguise—”

Amalia sprang forwards, and playfully placed her hand on Joanna’s mouth ; but, at that instant, a light tapping at the door arrested their attention.

The Queen’s Page of honour appeared, bearing a packet which was carefully sealed, and bound with a silken string.

“ A Courier, my Liege,” said the Page, “ arrived but this minute at our gates : he begged to see one of the confidential servants—I was called ; and this packet he gave me with strict injunctions to deliver it to no one save your Highness.”

“ Waits the Courier below ?” asked Joanna, as she carelessly took the parcel.

“ No, my Liege ; his errand being performed, he set spurs to his horse, nor could we distinguish his features, being masked.”

“ It is sufficient—leave us.”

The Queen opened the packet, which contained a letter rudely folded. She glanced over its contents. At first she stared in astonishment, being unable to comprehend its meaning,—then, as if a dreadful light, a terrible conviction flashed upon her mind, she grew pale, gave a slight shriek, and fell fainting into her chair.

CHAPTER X.

SUSPICION.

“ What matters it, the lawyer, doctor, priest,
 Do live by cheating, poisoning, and lying.
 The saddle is our shop, our books are bludgeons,
 Sharp pikes our pills, that, taken, cure for ever.”

The Robber.

“ I AM quite recovered now,—thanks, Amalia.
 My bower-maidens may quit me ; but, Jacintha,
 hasten thou to my husband the prince ; thou wilt
 find him with the Duke of Durazzo, either in
 the picture-gallery, or the great hall : beseech
 them both to repair to me instantly.—Peruse not
 that foul letter, Amalia, but give it me.—Oh !
 how unenviable a situation is that of Royalty !
 albeit though a crown be planted with thorns,
 there ever exist those who are ambitious to tear

it from the brows of the wearer. Yes, to hurl me from the seat which I occupy, some unknown traitors are attributing to me the most horrid crime that mortal being can be guilty of.—But softly! my husband, and the Duke are approaching; you had better retire, Amalia, for words probably will pass between them and me, which should not meet your gentle ear.”

As Joanna ceased speaking, Prince Andrea and the Duke of Durazzo entered the room. The former was surprised at the hasty summons, but the latter exhibited his usual unperturbed and collected demeanour.

“ Dear Husband, and kind Brother-in-law;” Joanna began; “ I thank ye for attending so promptly to my wishes; my suspense otherwise could not have been endured. Of whom so well as yourselves can I ask advice, touching the means to seize and bring to judgment the author of this most horrible letter? It has just been left at the villa by a masked courier. Noble Duke, I beseech thee to read it aloud to my husband.”

With a firm unwavering voice, Durazzo began as follows :—

“ To my gracious, and liege Queen,
Humbly greeting,

“ I the undersigned, this day elected chief of the Black Company, our late gallant leader having fallen in the skirmish fought for your Highness’s service, do herewith present the humble petition of myself and followers. We all regret the failure of your Highness’s late plan by the lago d’Averno; but what valiant men could do, we performed.—Now, seeing we lost so many of our brave people, whereby we are plunged into great grief, we make appeal to our Queen’s known justice, craving your Highness to remit to us one half of the money which our late lamented chief declared that you agreed to pay, in case we should succeed in dispatching a certain obnoxious person—”

“ Ha ! who is that ? ” interrupted Andrea, drawing back, pale and trembling, and in whose bosom the deadliest suspicion seemed to awake,

as he gazed upon the Queen;—" Dispatch a certain obnoxious person!—But, noble Duke, proceed, I understand."

" Our Sovereign will admire our moderation, for we are honourable men, and demand no more than our merits and justice warrant. The florins can be remitted to us in this manner :—at the fourth hour of the second night from the date hereof, one of our friends shall be stationed in the ruins near the Bay, commonly called the tomb of Agrippina ; and there the money can be tendered by any one of your Highness's confidential servants. Probably our Queen will employ us again, for we are cheap men, and trustworthy ; and we doubt not, that, without any suspicion being attached to your royal self, we shall be able to remove the before-mentioned obnoxious person.

" LAMBERTI.

" Written by our trusty clerk ; and
sealed in our presence."

The effect produced by this letter on Andrea

and Durazzo, as may be conceived, greatly differed. Although totally unprepared for such an audacious epistle from the robbers, Durazzo, when he recollected that he had given them as yet little or no money, did not much marvel at the step which they had taken. He felt, however, perfectly at ease as respected his own position ; since he was now assured that Di Loria had been faithful, inasmuch as he had not divulged to his men the names of the party negotiating, as it appeared, for the Queen. He had only to remit them, in the name of Joanna, a few hundred florins, bid them quit, for a short time, that part of the country, and all, he doubted not, would be well.

Andrea pondered deeply ; his brow grew dark ; he bit his lip, clenched his hands, and struggled to curb his violent feelings. At length the imprisoned passion burst forth ; he stamped wildly, and with eyes that flashed rage, exclaimed :—

“ Ay, it must be so—my suspicions are confirmed—she is guilty !—away with the wanton

thing to the dungeon ! seize her, Duke !—what, am I disobeyed ?—then thither will I drag her myself.”

He rushed forwards, and caught the shuddering Queen by the arm : but Durazzo, although secretly rejoicing at the conduct of the Prince, did not wish at present for affairs to take so desperate a turn. He knew that no positive proof of guilt could be brought against Joanna, and that the utmost advantage which might be derived from past circumstances, would be the creating a suspicion in the public mind.

“ My noble Prince !” cried the Duke, interposing between him and Joanna : “ I firmly believe that the Queen is innocent—I will stake my life upon it.—Forbear ! rash Prince, forbear !”

“ Nay ;” thundered Andrea ; “ she shall to the dungeon.—Ha ! murderess ! look upon thy injured husband !—but, God be praised ! he yet lives to wreak vengeance upon thee !”

“ Have mercy on me ! hear me !” faintly cried Joanna.

“ My Prince,” continued the wily Duke, who appeared to be Joanna’s champion and friend :—
“ had the Queen been criminal, would she have summoned thee and me to read the very letter substantiating her guilt ? reflect on this, and turn thy vengeance on some other object. My sister-in-law, I repeat, must be innocent.”

“ Oh ! my dear lord !” cried Joanna, as she now disengaged herself from her husband’s grasp, and threw her arms around his neck ; “ How canst thou, Andrea, entertain this foul suspicion !—thee whom I cherish, my friend, my king, my husband ! how could I injure ?—God has heard in secret my prayers for thy welfare ; He knows my heart, that it rejoices in thy happiness.—Pierce me not with these angry looks ; let my tears plead for me ! Oh ! Andrea, my husband, I have not—I have not committed this great crime !”

Joanna wept sincerely, passionately : her face was hid upon Andrea’s breast, and her long hair fell wildly over his shoulder.

The Prince was silent ; his features relaxed

from their ferocity ; and, though his nature was too selfish and dull to be capable of much tender feeling, he seemed moved by Joanna's appeal.

“ Listen to the Queen, attend to her !” cried Durazzo affecting much emotion, but whose heart was like the ‘ nether millstone.’ “ Be calm, my Prince ; some light shall soon be thrown on this most mysterious affair. I grieve that none of the miscreants were taken alive in the late affray, but a troop of horse, dispatched by me yesterday morning, has, I doubt not, ere this, made many of them prisoners ; and from their confession we may gain some clue touching the traitorous barons or citizens who employed them.”

“ Thanks to thee for thy vigilance, noble Duke !” said Andrea ; “ at all events, we will capture that man who intends waiting for the money in the tomb of Agrippina.”

“ S'death ! I must save the fellow though, by giving him timely notice,” thought Durazzo.

“ Their letter, good Duke, must have been written and dispatched before thy troops reached their lurking place.”

“ No doubt of it, my Prince. If it so please you, I will send this very hour to Naples for a chosen band of *Sbirri*, to guard your royal person ; so that, in future, whatever be the machinations of these unknown malcontents and traitors, thou shalt have nothing to fear.”

This last declaration had a great effect in pacifying the timid Andrea. The idea that his own life was in danger was uppermost in his mind. All he desired was an assurance of personal safety ; and the imbecile Prince, being satisfied on this head, turned to Durazzo with a countenance beaming with gratitude.

“ A thousand thanks, my faithful Duke ! Oh ! that all our subjects resembled thee !—What number of body-guard wilt thou send for ?”

“ About three or five hundred,—just as your Highness shall deem proper :” answered Durazzo.

“ Then five hundred, by all means !” quickly cried Andrea. “ Let them be stationed around the villa. I will have a dozen always near my person. I—I will also dress myself in armour.”

“ A politic measure, my Prince : thou mayst

then defy an assassin's dagger," observed Durazzo, inwardly sneering.

"Assassin! dagger!" exclaimed Andrea with a shudder. "Speak no more of that again, good Duke, I pray thee: thou makest my blood run cold. But mind thou the *Sbirri*, the body-guard. If ever I go a hawking, or ride one mile again, without a troop of body-guard, San Marco consign me to the bottomless pit."

Andrea then addressed himself to the Queen. Timid irritability, rather than a real conviction of her guilt, had prompted him to his late act of violence.

"Pardon me, Joanna, I have been hasty—I will not believe thee in league with those traitors: their designs the good Duke henceforward will frustrate; nevertheless we will not quit the Villa until the body-guard arrives. Noble Duke, in what kind of armour dost thou recommend me to case myself?"

At this question the false Durazzo, with great difficulty, maintained his gravity.

“ Not chain-mail, my liege : I should recommend plate armour, for that will completely protect your body.”

“ Plate armour—good. I will then instantly summon the armourer ; and go thou, good Duke, and dispatch thy messengers to Naples for the body-guard:—There, Joanna, resume thy embroidery, read thy books, and scrolls, and be at thy ease. By the holy wafer ! I will match the traitors now !—plate armour, and five hundred body-guard.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOVE LETTER.

" One in whose love I felt were given
 The mixed delights of either sphere ;
 All that the spirit seeks in Heaven,
 And all the senses burn for here."

Moore.

WALTER Courtenay, for some days, had been an invalid in the royal villa at Baiæ. Through the skill of the Hebrew physician, he had nearly recovered: he owed much, however, to the attention of Queen Joanna, and Amalia themselves: for in the chivalric times of which we write, ladies were ever ready to minister to the wants, and soothe the pains of such warriors as happened to be wounded in their service.

The room which the English Captain occupied was situated in a retired part of the mansion.

The little oriel window commanded an enchanting prospect of the azure bay with its various islands and capes; busy towns, and white villages skirted the indented shore, and gave animation to the picture. The eye could wander as far as Sorrento, destined long after to give birth to Tasso; while beyond the woody promontory of Posilippo, where Genius mourns over the ashes of Virgil, towered Vesuvius, its double summit circled with silver smoke, and its sides, heeding not the fire, the terror that lurked beneath, clothed with olive groves, and purple vineyards.

The classic and picturesque scene was well adapted to enchant the tasteful individual who occupied the apartment. A placid elegance, rather than a gaiety of manner; a calm dignity which spoke superiority, while it did not offend his fellows, distinguished Walter Courtenay. His person, though extremely tall, was exquisitely proportioned, and combined great strength with agility. He was a polished courtier, and—rare union in those comparatively unlettered

times—a disciplined soldier, and an accomplished scholar.

Courtenay's origin was unknown even to himself: yet he was not one of those unfortunates doomed to bear the "damning stain" cast upon them by a father's folly or crime. His guardian, whom for many years he had not beheld, had, from some unexplained motive, kept him in profound ignorance with respect to his family; yet he had assured him that he was the offspring of wedded and honourable parents. A soldier's profession he had espoused at an early age; and having passed through a series of vicissitudes and adventures, that need not here be related, he had attained to the military distinction of captain of a large body of English mercenaries.

Courtenay was now unusually meditative; he sat at a table with writing materials before him, which he appeared to have been using. In one hand he held a sealed letter, and with the other, as his elbow rested on the table, he supported his head; his eye was fixed, and his figure motionless.

“ They will come no more ;” he murmured audibly. “ Three days have elapsed, and I have not seen them : they deem me convalescent, and therefore have forsaken me. What is there in this creature that so fascinates, so intrals me ? Beauty’s eye has beamed upon me ; I have basked in her smiles from the Tiber to the Rhine ; yet never till now did I feel myself her slave.”

Courtenay was one of those ardent, aspiring spirits, existing now as well as in olden time, whose delight is in adventure, and deeds of daring ; who estimate the value of a prize in an exact proportion with the difficulty experienced in obtaining it ; who, were there two paths leading, equally certain, to the temple of happiness, the one through a flowery valley, and the other along the brink of precipices, and over craggy mountains, would prefer the latter.

“ How can I,” he soliloquised, “ a simple military adventurer, my lineage unknown, a leader of mere mercenary troops, how can I woo, and dare hope to win a princess of Naples ?—

yet even to be honoured with her favourable opinion; to be greeted with one kind smile; to live, to breathe near her, has witchery, has rapture in it!"

The door opened, the tapestry was thrust aside, and a figure, with a sidelong, scrambling motion, advanced and stood in the centre of the room.

The English Captain raised his eyes, and, attentively surveying the stranger, addressed him.

"Art thou the worthy person whom my friend and Confessor, Father Robert, has recommended to my service?"

"Great Captain," replied the stranger, "I am; my name is Forester. I am the holy Father's private servitor."

"Ay, Forester; that was the name. Mine honest fellow-countryman, for such, it appears thou art—"

"Yes, truly, honourable sir;" quoth the Servitor, as Courtenay hesitated to proceed,—
"England is my father-land, and Eastcheap, in London, saw my eyes uncloze."

“Thou hast been many years in Naples ;” said Courtenay, nowise offended by Forester’s loquacity ; “and without doubt, art well acquainted with Italian perfidy and deceit.”

“Many years, great Captain.—Yes, men in this country are, in truth, monstrously perfidious. Honesty is a pearl not to be found in Italian waters.”

“I have received a high character of thee from Friar Robert :”

“I am infinitely obliged ;” exclaimed Forester, twirling his thumbs, and modestly hanging his head ; “I do my best—his Holiness rarely finds fault—I never oppose his humour ; and then I get for him the choicest meats, and liquors—”

“Meats ?—liquors ?—I understood that the Father lives upon roots and water.”

Forester, who, in his confusion, had let slip too much, hastily proceeded to correct his error ; or rather to divert the meaning of his words—
“Meats ! liquors ! heaven bless you, great Captain ! he causes them daily to be prepared under

my direction—capons, soups, macaroni, cordials, and such like. He does not of course luxuriate on them himself. He feeds a hundred poor families in Naples, and at Pozzuolo—sends cordials to sick folks thirty miles round—meats! liquors! by St. Mark! he expends half his worldly goods to feed the poor.”

“ This is just like Father Robert, the holy, the generous man!—he indeed merits all the fame and popularity which he enjoys.—But, good fellow, we were talking of Italian treachery—I have a little affair which I wish to entrust to thy execution—I have been deceived so often by Italian Servatori, who promise every thing and perform nothing, and would betray their masters for a paulo, that I am resolved never to trust them again. But an Englishman, and one so long tried as thyself, I am persuaded I may safely rely on.”

Forester coughed, and smoothed, with much complacency, his buff doublet.

“ I will be honourable as my forefathers who

sleep in Aldgate-Church, and as silent as their granite tombs."

"First receive this—it may assist thee in thy praise-worthy resolution." Courtenay placed several gold bizants into Forester's hand; the latter chinked the coin, looked wistfully on them, and then at the donor.

"Nay, good Captain, I thank thee; but much as I love money, and will receive it from Italians when I render them a benefit; yet, if ever I take one copper bajoco for serving a countryman in a foreign land, may I be whipped from Baiæ to Naples!"

The refusal of his largess, although it surprised Courtenay, raised Forester high in his opinion. He received back the gold pieces, exclaiming:

"Then thou shalt be rewarded, good fellow, at no distant period in a more honourable manner. Meantime, attend to me, and ask no questions. I wish this billet to be placed privately into the hands of the princess Amalia."

Forester's unfortunate eye took a complete

circuit of the room ; and his hair, though ever erect, seemed if possible to assume a greater resemblance to the “ fretful porcupine’s quills.” He comprehended at once the nature of his commission, yet he was determined to serve the ambitious lover.

“ I should have employed one of the Queen’s pages ;” observed Courtenay ; “ but for reasons before stated, I prefer trusting thee.”

“ Nor shalt thou have cause to repent of thy choice, honoured captain.”

“ Thou must return to me with the lady’s answer as speedily as possible. Now away ! and St. George prosper thee, my good fellow !”

Whatever might have been the reflections of Walter Courtenay, waiting, in thrilling anxiety, the result of the declaration of his lowly love, we must leave him, to follow his unfortunate, though honest messenger.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SURPRISAL.

“—Come hither fellow !
Which way hast thou been ?”

Julius Caesar.

WITH quick step, neither looking on that, nor on this side, did Forester tread corridor after corridor. As the bearer of Friar Robert's pleasure in temporal, and, sometimes, spiritual concerns, he had access to almost every apartment in the villa ; and he at once directed his course towards the rooms occupied by Queen Joanna, and her companions Amalia and Philippa. The poor fellow, in his haste, did not observe that he was followed ; but now a person behind him, in a suppressed though fierce tone of voice, called upon him to halt.

Forester started, and, looking over his shoulder, perceived a figure advancing fast upon him. In the first excess of his fear, he was at a loss to decide whether it would be politic to fly or to stand: but, while he was deliberating, the stranger overtook him, and seized him by the arm. Forester quaked from head to foot, and unwisely, although scarcely conscious of what he did, pressed his hand to his doublet, to be assured that his billet was secure. Good reason had he to tremble, for the person who stood before him, was the dark-visaged, the dreaded Durazzo! Hovering around the apartment of the English Captain, whom he regarded as his mortal enemy for the part which he had taken in the late affray, Durazzo had noticed the entrance of Forester. As traitors ever believe others bent on treachery, he conceived that an intrigue might be existing between Friar Robert, to whom in spite of friendly appearances, he knew he was obnoxious, and this adventurous Englishman; Forester being the agent betwixt the parties. He was deter-

mined, therefore, to ascertain whether his conjecture was founded on truth, and followed the Servitor unperceived, until he had proceeded to a sufficient distance from Courtenay's room.

“ Sirrah! move another step, or make an exclamation, and, by the foul fiend, thou diest!”

Durazzo presented his dagger at Forester's throat: many persons more brave than our English friend, in a retired locality, and under similar circumstances, would have experienced a rather uneasy sensation. Forester, as Durazzo's eyes glared, with a terrible expression, upon him, and his weapon gleamed in the dusk, close to his bosom, shrank with a dread akin to horror. His thin lantern jaws worked, his teeth chattered, and sinking on his trembling knees, the unhappy Servitor cried in broken and piteous accents:

“ Have mercy upon me! Oh, spare my life! and I will reveal all!”

“ Reveal!” muttered Durazzo, his visage growing more black and menacing.—“ Reveal

what!—villain, arise! answer my questions, or thou livest not a minute longer!”

Forester gained his legs; his mouth was wide open, and he gasped for breath.

“What passed between thee, and the English Captain?” demanded Durazzo.

“Passed!—English Captain!—what passed? nothing at all, my royal Duke.”

“Scoundrel! thou liest! didst thou not say this moment that thou wouldst reveal all?”

Durazzo again lifted his dagger—“Ha! wherefore dost thou so press thy doublet?—marry, my steel is not yet in thy side.”

“Thy steel in my side?” groaned Forester, and once more he clasped his hands, and sank upon his knees.

“Cease this foolery, knave! answer me—what business hadst thou in the soldier’s apartment?”

“Give me time, your Grace, and, as I promised, I will discover all. He who is my master, the holy Friar Robert, dispatched me to yonder room. I carried to the Captain

a cross, and a rosary for him to count his aves upon."

"This will not avail thee! rascal! thou playest me false—take off thy doublet."

"Take off my doublet?" echoed the Servitor.
"What! would your Grace have me strip myself in this corridor?"

"I do suspect thee, knave! fear did not make thee just now so anxiously gripe thy doublet—strip, I command thee!"

Forester plainly saw that Courtenay's love affair must be discovered; for to transfer the billet from the folds of his doublet to any other part of his body, without detection, would be impossible. There remained no other alternative. With a deep groan, then, and many an interjection, he doffed his buff doublet, and flung it upon the floor.

Marvellous to say, no billet made its appearance: light illumined faithful Forester's eye; but too soon it was to pass away! Durazzo, pointing with his sword, desired him to shake the garment.

Softly Forester moved it to and fro.

“Is it made of lace, or spider’s web, that thou dost handle it so delicately, sirrah?—shake it, as I order thee.”

Forester perforce obeyed, when, alas! the frail scroll that enshrined Courtenay’s secret, and contained his passionate breathings of love to a Princess of Naples, fell at the feet of the malicious Durazzo!

The Duke, with his weapon’s point, raised the billet, and, unhesitatingly breaking the seal, glanced hastily over its contents.

“Ha! I have him;” he muttered; “my enemy is in my power. This to a scion of Royalty?—imprisonment—nay death itself shall be his.” He carefully folded the letter, and placed it in his vest.

“Rascal!” he exclaimed, turning to the trembling Servitor; “thou hast endeavoured to deceive me; but too mean an object art thou for my vengeance. Get thee gone, varlet, to thy master, and, if thou choolest, disclose to him all that has

taken place. Shouldst thou venture again in the vicinity of the Captain's room, where I shall immediately station a guard, by Heaven, thy head shall be lopped from thy plebeian carcase !”

Forester, rejoicing that his life was spared, although deeply concerned for the fate of the gallant Englishman, hurried down the adjoining gallery.

Durazzo called one of his men-at-arms, who had remained concealed in a neighbouring room ; and, giving him directions to secure the person of Courtenay, walked in gloomy reverie towards the apartments of the Queen.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE QUEEN'S JUDGMENT.

"But Antonio is certainly undone."

"Nay, that's true, that's very true—go,
seek me an officer."

Merchant of Venice.

In different attitudes, and with countenances expressive of very dissimilar feelings, four individuals were met in the saloon that adjoined Queen Joanna's *camerella*. The old Countess, Philippa, formerly Joanna's governess, and still her companion and adviser, was full of eager curiosity; her eyes sparkled, and her shrivelled lips were apart. Durazzo stood erect and stern, holding a letter in his hand, while real or feigned indignation blackened his brow.

With pouting lips that intimated impatience

the memory of good King Robert, whose delight was in justice, not a hair of Courtenay's head shall be injured. But, Duke, thou hast sent for my husband, and Father Robert,—I would they were here to judge concerning the matter."

"Prince Andrea," answered Durazzo, "will not obey the summons,—he is busy casing himself in plate armour; but the Friar—"

The door was hastily opened by Forester, and Robert entered.

"Peace be with ye, my children! but I am glad that ye sent for me;" began the rubicund Father, throwing back his cowl, for he was almost out of breath. "San Antonio! this is a bad business; my Servitor hath disclosed to me the whole; and for the part which the villain hath acted therein, he shall do penance for a month."

"Be not too severe, holy Father, upon good master Forester:" said Amalia smiling.

"Princess, thou art pleased to be jocose, but the present is no time for the indulgence of mirth. My liege Queen, if thou art for executing this soldier, and verily I think he deserveth

death, let his beheadment take place privately. The world must not be acquainted with the nature of his crime ; such knowledge might serve to cast disgrace upon the Royal family, since evil tongues would not be wanting to insinuate that the Princess Amalia gave the fellow encouragement."

" Most true ;" said Durazzo ; " that Servitor of thine, good Father, must be bound to silence. In truth, we must all observe secrecy."

Amalia again grew pale, and trembled ; Joanna was thoughtful.

" Could he not be imprisoned for life ?" suggested the Countess Philippa.

" No, daughter, no !" replied Friar Robert ; " I like not your imprisonments ; freedom, and then revenge too frequently follow. Let him die the death !—No danger, saith St. Jerome, when the evil one is in the grave. By the bones of St. Stephen ! what audacity ! what treachery ! after all the honours that have been conferred upon him.—Duke, he had better be executed with as little delay as possible."

Durazzo nodded assent, and turned to the Queen that she might ratify their sentence.

“ Though your generous nature, my liege,” he said, “ be ever inclined to mercy, I am humbly of opinion, that, in the present case, your Highness should not extend it to the prisoner.”

Joanna seemed collecting her powers to speak, she waved her hand, and thus addressed them :

“ I bear, fair friends, the name of Queen, yet seldom do I take upon myself to dictate : albeit, though still in my minority, by God's assistance, my will in the present instance shall have some weight. Ye call upon me to condemn a fellow creature to death, and whom ? the preserver of my husband's life. What is his crime ? at the worst, it is but the presumption of addressing words of regard to one of the Angevine race. I grant he has erred, and is highly to be reprehended ; but I firmly believe that his error has been committed in a reckless moment of unguarded passion ; and that, when he calmly reflects, he will repent of his rashness and folly.

The punishment, therefore, which I award, is neither death, nor imprisonment, but that, with the morning's light, he be sent forth on his good steed, never to return to our villa, or, covertly or openly, to hold communication with my fair kinswoman again. In consideration of the Captain's eminent service to us all, I shall create him Count of Lucera, which fief, as ye know, is in my gift. And Duke of Durazzo, when thou sendest him away from our villa, let this scarf be presented him, as a remembrance of gratitude from the Queen of Naples."

Joanna ceased speaking; an indescribable grace, a persuasive energy of manner, rather than eloquence of words, at once fascinated, and overruled her auditors. Durazzo and Friar Robert remained silent; they were convinced of the justice of her decision, and, although they desired, dared not oppose it.—Delivering to the Duke the embroidered scarf, the Queen took Amalia by the hand, and retired from the saloon.

" Virgin mother! that the crown of this realm

should sit upon the brow of a woman !" growled Friar Robert.

" This is the first time she hath dared to thwart our views ;" muttered Durazzo. " But I tell thee, friend Robert, it shall be the last !"

The Friar drew his filthy frock around him, and shuffled towards the door ; while the plotting and ambitious Durazzo followed with folded arms, and eyes bent on the ground.

CHAPTER XIV.

LAST HOURS AT BALÆ.

“ Farewell to thee, but not to love and hope,
Their stars still shining on my devious way,
Shall teach my soul with life's worst ills to cope,
And chase thy lowering clouds, Despair, away.
Thy memory, love, shall twine around my heart,
Nor time, nor change shall bid its bloom depart.”

MEANTIME, the English Captain was waiting some answer to his billet of lowly love. Passion had urged him to the act of indiscretion which he had committed. Reason might assure him that his suit would be in vain, yet he refused to listen to her still calm voice. Hope threw her golden sunlight on the darkness of reality, and Imagination already lapped him in dreams of Elysium.

While he was thus yielding to sweet but de-

lusive thought, heavy footsteps were heard approaching his apartment; his door was rudely thrown open, and a gaily-attired soldier entered, followed by several men-at-arms.

“ In the name of the Duke of Durazzo,” cried the officer, “ I make thee my prisoner—men, seize him !”

Courtenay astonished, and totally at a loss to account for this sudden arrest, drew his sword, and placed himself in an attitude of defence.

“ Look ye, friends,” he exclaimed, “ there must be some mistake—reflect a moment—I am not one to brook insults tamely.”

But several of the men-at-arms, rushing behind him, grasped him around the body; and, in a few minutes, Courtenay was disarmed, and bound in irons.

For some time he chafed in his ignominious fetters; wearied by conjectures, he at last persuaded himself that Forester had betrayed him; and he poured forth maledictions, and vowed vengeance on the unhappy Servitor.

Durazzo, however, was at length compelled to order his release ; and the Grand Seneschal acquainted him that he was to leave the villa on the morrow.

* * * * *

Brightly, majestically, the sun wheeled from the Levantine wave ; the diamond dew glittered upon leaf and flower ; and, in the olive-groves, the birds sang jubilee. Morning ! what hour is like unto thine ? thou scatterest from thy wing freshness and fragrance : thou revivest all nature from the death of night.—Shall not a morning also come for the soul of man ? Must he, when the day-star of life is set, for ever lie in his dark and narrow cell ? No, for some high purpose, known only to the infinite Mind, are we created ; and not for the few brief hours of pain and sorrow which we pass in a perishing world. This our mortal existence must share the fate of yon bodiless vapour that skirts the horizon—melt away, as if it had never been.—

Yet, Man! doubt not—tremble not!—all nature, from the reviving flower in the valley, to the sun flashing over the mountain-top, cries aloud, “thus shall spring thy unquenchable spirit; and thus shall a morn of immortality burst upon the night of the tomb!”

On the shell-strewn esplanade before the villa, Walter Courtenay reined his prancing charger. A graceful youth, his esquire, followed him, mounted upon a black jennet. Courtenay was no longer ignorant of the cause of his sudden dismissal, for Forester, in spite of Durazzo’s threats, had contrived, during the night, to communicate with him, and had explained all the affair. Though burning with rage, and longing to be revenged on Durazzo, he considered it prudent, for the time, to mask his sentiments.

The Cavalier now received from the hands of the Grand Seneschal, the embroidered scarf, the honorary remembrance of Queen Joanna. He wound it across his glittering corslet, a gift of

which the first soldier in Christendom might have been proud. The Constable next presented him with a scroll that would invest him with the title of Count, and the revenue arising from the fief of Lucera. Strange to relate, Courtenay politely but resolutely refused the splendid offer. All marvelled at this singular instance of abstinence, for the English Captain was considered needy; extravagant pride, they thought, alone dictated his conduct.

Courtenay bade farewell to the Cavaliers around, who, ignorant of the offence for which he was banished the presence of Royalty, imagined that he was but departing in knightly sort, being now convalescent.

The Queen and Amalia, it may be presumed, had not yet arisen from their silken couches; Courtenay, however, as he glanced towards the eastern wing of the villa, perceived two females on the balcony, and his eye instantly recognised them. Yes, Joanna and Amalia had come forward to witness their preserver's departure, thus

honouring him with an interest that might scarcely have been bestowed on the greatest warrior of the realm. Courtenay doffed his plumed helmet, and bowed twice to his saddle-bow ; then, turning his steed, he caracolled down the slope, followed by his Esquire.

The English Captain and his companion were soon concealed amidst the thick shade of the orangery : they had reached the outer avenue, and the road to Pozzuolo lay before them, when a page, in gay party-coloured attire, issued from behind a projecting ruin, where, it seemed more than probable, he had been purposely stationed. He placed a billet into the Soldier's hand, and disappeared. Courtenay eagerly opened it, and read as follows :

“ Adieu, Soldier of England ; for we must meet no more. If thou dost consult thy own interest, thy own safety, thou wilt never again seek to approach me. Head thy troops, achieve deeds of honour ; but Oh ! run not rashly into danger :—spare thyself, if it be only for the sake

of one who would mourn should ill befall thee. Deem me not proud—deem me not cold, although I can never think of thee in any light save that of the preserver of my royal kinsfolk and myself.

AMALIA.”

Courtenay pressed the billet to his lips; he murmured a few incoherent words, yet his heart was heavy with presentiments of a dark future. He felt assured that he was beloved, but dared not harbour a hope of ever possessing the object of his affection. Suddenly turning to his follower, he exclaimed:

“ Spur we for Pozzuolo; our troop, thou sayest, awaits us there; we will continue our march to the Adriatic coast: certes, this affair hath detained us long; yet it hath introduced thee, gallant, to the magnates of the land—and myself—spur, spur for Pozzuolo!”

CHAPTER XV.

GLIMPSES INTO FUTURITY.

“ Spelunca alta fuit, vastoque immanis hiatu,
Scrupea, tuta lacu nigro, nemorumque tenebris.”

Virgil.

NIGHT had closed in over that wild and desolate district, where once stood the populous town of Cumæ. The scene was highly picturesque ; but the craggy volcanic hills, the black lakes encircled by gigantic rocks, and the dark hanging woods, silent and unstirred by any wind, had less the character of beauty impressed upon them, than the stamp of horror.

Above, the clouds were volumed and dense, and, through their blackness, the moon was unable to pour her rays. Suddenly they opened, and a wavy line of living fire glanced from their

dark mass to the earth. The hot sulphureous plain of the Solfatara, Mount Gaurus, and the deep imbosomed waters of the Averno, were distinctly seen for a moment. Then crashed the thunder, peal on peal reverberating round and round, like the voices of the unblest in Tartarus, or the howling demon of the coming storm ; until the echoes, wearying themselves to faintness, at length died away, and all was profound gloom and silence as before.

Through the wood that covers the site of the ancient Cumæ, a man was moving with a stealthy but rapid step. He was in a military undress of the period. A montero cap, adorned with a feather, was drawn over his brows. His boots were of yellow leather. His cloak bordered with the richest miniver, and the costly hilt of his long Milan sword, bespoke him a person of consequence, if not of royal rank. He hurried through the labyrinth of trees, pursuing a path scarcely distinguishable, and which none could have threaded unless well acquainted with the

locality. The thunder-clouds continued to roll nearer, and the lightning flashed more frequently. He now entered a circular space or glade, and as he looked upwards, the Heavens, ever and anon, appeared to be one vast sheet of flame.— Superstition had erected an image of the Virgin in that solitary place; and while his dazzled eye rested on the marble statue, it suddenly fell from its pedestal, shivered by a thunder-bolt into countless fragments.

The soldier continued on his way. In a short time he issued from the wood, and crossing a stream which fell into the Averno, bent his steps down a solitary dingle. He paused at the foot of a huge mound, or rather barren rock, which, starting abruptly from the margin of a small lake, rose to a considerable height. On the summit might have been discerned an octagonal tower, half in ruins, and covered with ivy. Its builder was unknown, though a vague tradition existed that it had been erected for military purposes by Coriolanus, when, a traitor to his country,

he established himself among the Volsci. The fortalice was occupied now neither by soldiers, nor robbers. It was dedicated to science, being converted into an observatory ; and there dwelt the renowned Astrologer of Cumæ.

The stranger ascended by steps cut in the rock. One path alone led to the building ; and, halfway up, his progress was arrested by a massy portal, the iron spikes of which intimated that the learned resident took especial care to secure himself against any sudden attack. The soldier struck on a bell, and presently the Astrologer's Dwarf demanded who craved admittance. The visitor's name was no sooner announced, than the gate creaked on its hinge, and the diminutive figure strode up the remaining portion of the rock, bidding the stranger follow him.

The period whereof we write may be called the palmy days of Astrology, a blind belief in which science continued, in a greater or less degree, to infatuate men, until the confirmation and establishment of the Copernican system.—

An astrologer was a man of much consequence, and from the avidity with which people consulted him, and the heavy fees he usually demanded, oftentimes became possessed of great wealth. It was just as common then for families of respectability to appoint their own astrologer, as for the same parties now to employ a certain physician or attorney. Some of these "sage readers of the sky" were solely in the pay of princes, while others practised for themselves among the community at large.

The stranger was ushered into the study of the Astrologer of Cumæ. A lamp hung from the ceiling, and threw a dim uncertain ray on rolls of musty parchment, and various astronomical instruments ranged around. The feeble light discovered the sage himself absorbed in thought, and astral calculations. He sat in a chair, the curious and antique workmanship of which might have pronounced it as having belonged to the Sibyl herself, who, two thousand years before, wrote her prophecies in the neighbouring cavern.

On his head he wore a high conical cap, and his hair, escaping from beneath it, fell on his shoulders as white as snow. His robe, in richness and length, might have vied with the caftan of a Persian satrap. Around his shoulder, and passing under his left arm, was a broad belt, on which, with other cabalistic figures, were depicted the signs of the zodiac. Beside him was an astro-labe ; a fair scroll of parchment lay on the table, and at his elbow were three iron-clasped books, the papyrus crumbling and blackened by years ; for they had been written, so their possessor asserted, five centuries before the Christian era.

It was not until the soldier had twice spoken, that the Astrologer raised his head. An immediate recognition took place, and great deference was paid on the part of Florelli, such being the name of the sage. He bade the dwarf place for his visitor a chair, and, uncovering his white head, and laying down the reed with which he wrote, entered into conversation.

“ I perceive, fair sir, thou art anxious to as-

certain the result of my labours, or thou wouldst scarcely have ventured hither on such an inclement night."

As he spoke a thunder-cloud burst over the building. The crumbling walls shook to their foundation, and the lightning flashed past the narrow loop-holes.

"I am not accustomed, Florelli, to heed the elements. My only fear is that the heavens are too obscure just now to admit of your observations."

It was the Duke of Durazzo who uttered these words. Yes, though he contemned and repudiated the religious faith of his country, he did not escape the superstition of the times. On many a former occasion he had consulted the Astrologer of Cumæ; but of late he had been doubly anxious to peer behind the veil of futurity, since the plans which he had laid, and the fate of the kingdom seemed to be drawing to a crisis. A difficult process on which the sage had long been employed, was to be completed that night; and

Durazzo, highly privileged, would hear and see that which no other mortal might know. Florelli, however, was not quite prepared, but hoped that in an hour his grand and final calculation would be worked out. The Duke, accordingly, with a patience that ill agreed with his natural impetuosity, waited the pleasure of the man of science. He sat with his arms folded, while the sage continued poring over the musty volumes already alluded to, and drawing circles, parallelograms, and other mysterious figures on the parchment before him.

Florelli at length ordered his dwarf from the apartment, and assuming the stern gravity that characterized men of his profession, addressed his illustrious visitor.

“ Duke of Durazzo, my task is accomplished. I can obtain no further information touching thy destiny, beyond the facts I am about to reveal. Ere entering upon the subject, I must inform thee that I make use of no necromantic arts. I eschew all communion with spirits of air, and

the evil one beneath : for if I did not, I should be a magician, such as Cecco D'Ascoli, who thou dost know, last year was very justly burnt alive. I simply consult the stars, and, from their manifold appearances, draw my conclusions ; while as a counter-check, I search these volumes, and if their prophecies agree with the bright pages of the sky, I conclude that I have arrived at truth."

Durazzo begged the speaker, if it were not asking too much, to inform him who compiled, or whence he obtained the books in question.

" That is a secret, my lord Duke. The origin of these tomes I have never revealed to the world, lest, their value being known, I should be deprived of them. Nevertheless feeling assured thou wilt betray nothing that passes between us, I will satisfy thee on the subject.— Know then, Duke of Durazzo, that these pages were written by the celebrated Sibyl of Cumæ."

" What ! the Sibyl who brought her prophetic verses, if I recollect aright, to Tarquin

the Second, and afterwards vanished from the world !”

“ The same. It is now eighteen centuries ago—thou might’st deem as much by these tattered and moth-eaten leaves, which a breath of air would blow out of their iron covers.”

“ But how is it possible, Florelli ? the Sibylline books, all historians agree, were destroyed by fire in the troublous times of Sylla.”

“ So it was generally believed, your Grace. I, however, on perusing the ancient records respecting them, had my doubts on the subject. It is ten years since that I determined on searching the Sibyl’s cave near this spot. Long I toiled in penetrating through, and clearing away the ruins that half choke up that ancient place of oracles. Success crowned my efforts. In the farthest compartment, within a stone chest, I found the wondrous volumes. A slip of papyrus lay on them, stating that, during the conflagration of the capitol, one of the priests of the temple conveyed them thither. The man on his

return, I have reason to believe, was assassinated by a party of Pompey's soldiers, and thus the fate of the renowned prophecies remained an inscrutable secret."

Durazzo expressed himself satisfied, and urged the sage to enter at once upon the subject of his own fortunes.

"I will proceed, your Grace, since I have now explained the legitimate source of my knowledge. How the thunder growls! I fear me thou canst scarcely understand my words.—Well, for a month past I have been considering thy horoscope, and drawing my inferences from the appearance of thy natal star. That great events are about to transpire in this kingdom, I am well satisfied; and from the troubled aspect of Jupiter, beneath which planet thou wert born, I am also convinced that thou wilt be a principal actor therein. Mercury is lord of the ascendant in the house of death; therefore, within a year, some one of high rank will fall in battle. Had Jupiter occupied that station, I

should not have scrupled to say—thou wert the man. Last night I perceived Saturn enter into baleful opposition with Mars, the latter being in the twelfth house, or the house of enemies. This portends that revolution, war, and bloodshed are about to take place, while one man will either fall for ever, or be exalted above all others.”

Durazzo, who had sat knitting his brows, and looking upon the ground, started up; but presently, as if ashamed of betraying such emotion, he resumed his place opposite to the speaker.

“What I have mentioned, my lord Duke, is indicated by the aspect of the heavenly bodies. I should not pronounce such for facts, did I not find a full confirmation in these wondrous volumes before me. Yes, here are prophecies that, with the language of the stars, agree to a tittle. Howbeit, saving in one point, the predictions are full of mystery, and will admit of various constructions. Yet I will read to thee the passages which bear upon the present question.”

At this moment a tremendous crash was heard, and the Dwarf, rushing into the room, stated that the lightning had struck part of the tower, and that the eastern wing had rolled, a mass of ruins, down into the valley. The sage, with much composure, asked the Dwarf if he thought the portion which they occupied was likely to fall also ; and the small squat creature declaring it might stand out the storm, Florelli commenced reading from the Sibylline volumes :

“ When Rome’s eagle shall have been laid prostrate for a thousand years ; when her long line of Emperors shall be dust, a woman will sway the fairest portion of Italy.”—“ Mark this, Duke ; are not these words wonderfully explicit ?—but to proceed.”—

“ Men will become discontented—they will sigh for a mightier ruler. Then will arise wars and commotions. The land will flow with blood. There will be a man dark, savage, vengeful—his garments are crimsoned with gore—he scoffs at sacred things—”

“Hold! thy books do lie!—If thou dost intend to insult me, I shall strike thee to the earth.”

“Nay, Royal Duke, I do not affirm that this personage is thyself. Another man is mentioned as his assistant and colleague, who may be my Duke of Durazzo. But we will open the second tome, and here the subject is again referred to.”

“There is a man who shall arise in Naples of royal stock. He shall be feared more than loved. Yet will he be wise and valiant withal. During the terrible commotions that will shake the land, he will seize the crown and sceptre. Yea, he will be lord of Italy; he will also invade France, overthrow the kingdom of Spain, and even be hailed King of distant Britain!—Duke, the Sibylline volumes say no more than this. The mighty man may be thyself, or another; and though the stars speak plainly of thee as a person who will act a prominent part in the approaching struggles, I must confess that doubt and uncertainty shadow thy ultimate destiny.”

Durazzo, for some time, meditated in silence. He then stated that he did not feel satisfied with regard to the declarations and revealments of the sage, and inquired if he dared, for a certain reward, practise necromancy."

" I have told thee already, my lord Duke, that it is contrary to my principles to hold communion with spirits :—moreover, I imagine that thou thyself wouldst fear—"

" Fear ! what have I to fear ? I would tempt earth and air, heaven and hell, to be assured of the fact that I am to be the mighty one—a conqueror, and a king !"

" Duke of Durazzo, if thou wilt hide the unhallowed transaction from the knowledge of mortal man—if thy flesh will not creep, and thou canst nerve thyself to hear, perhaps behold a being not of this world, I will for once depart from the resolution I have formed, and permit thee to receive from the mouth of one passed to the realms of death, a confirmation of thy fate."

" I will dare all, Florelli—dare all !"

“ Then accompany me.”

Durazzo followed the Astrologer into an inner apartment. The door closed upon them. The thunders pealed more loudly, and the forked lightnings flamed around the tower. What there transpired, we pretend not to unfold; but when all was over, and Durazzo issued from the dim and lonely chamber, his countenance was flushed, his hand clenched, and exultation was on his brow. That dark, aspiring, but superstitious man, then bade the Astrologer of Cumæ farewell.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER.

T'is but a worthless world to win or lose,
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who choose.

Childe Harold.

DURAZZO quitted the dingle, and soon lost sight of the Astrologer's observatory. The storm had now passed away ; and the moon, as if gathering additional lustre from the late obscurity, shed a tender trembling light on every object. Gentle airs fanned the woods, and wafted perfume from the orange-blossoms and roses, that hung their heads, weeping rain-drops, nature's nectareous tears. The nightingale again sprang forth from the boughs, and repeated her note, not sad but mellow, and joyful ; and the whole scene around,

as by enchantment, appeared converted from a gloomy Tartarus into a smiling Elysium.

If good spirits were abroad, evil ones walked the night also; and such a spirit dwelt in the bosom of Durazzo. He was retracing his path to the distant town, for he had repaired to Cumæ alone, since he would not that any one should know of his intercourse with the Astrologer. His step, at first quick and agitated, became measured and calm. Whatever he had seen in the secret chamber of the observatory, it had the effect of fixing his resolution. Self-aggrandizement was the ultimate aim of all his movements; and while ambition and superstition went hand in hand, his soul was not more pleased at the prospect of exaltation, than filled with stern delight at the idea of soon being able to indulge his every propensity, and to take signal vengeance on all his enemies.

A king!—there is a magic so irresistible in the name; there is such a craving in the nature of man for power, that the mind of that person

must be either very strong, or very virtuous, who would not eagerly grasp at a crown: who would not renounce the sweets of friendship, the charms of love, and all the humble delights of life, to mount a throne. A Diocletian, and a Charles, are but solitary examples of men casting from them the purple, and the sceptre, and triumphing over the innate love of dominion. Less seldom they appear in the history of the world, than those comets in our system, which circle the sun once in five hundred years. And even these individuals, in the step which they took, might have been influenced by ambition. They should be celebrated, and handed down to posterity, as differing from other monarchs, and should be accounted great because despising that which was august.

“A king—yes, I shall be a king!” thought Durazzo to himself; “in spite of men and gods, I will sit on a throne. What bars my way? who stands between me and the consummation of my hopes?—a weak woman—a grovelling,

soulless boy. The barrier must be broken down, crime committed, and blood spilt. Pshaw! what is crime, or what is virtue? man was born to pursue the path which seemeth to him best. Do not the stars announce me as an instrument, a scourge, a terror? while those singular prophecies ratify their intimations. But, beshrew me! all may prove an idle tale, the jugglery of knaves, who practise on the credulity of the times only to fill their purses.—No, I will not believe this. Yet, I believe there exists no sympathy between the heavens and the destinies of the common herd of mankind. The planets only give intimation when a spirit, destined to high achievement, enters on the theatre of life, and important events are about to transpire. Yes, ye stars! that I now gaze on! imperishable tablets of eternity! oracles beyond aught uttered here! I marvel not that the untaught mind should hail ye as divinities, or that the Greek sages placed Elysium beyond your sphere! is not my name even now sounded among ye, as the cruel, the

remorseless, the bloody? he who is to be the dreaded tyrant—ha! ha! the troubler of men—the shaker—the conqueror of the world?”

Thus the ambitious Durazzo yielded to dreams of approaching greatness; and as his bosom swelled, his step became more haughty, and each gesture betrayed the exultation within. He had reached a solitary dell between two wooded hills, when suddenly his ear caught the tramp of horses. They were rapidly approaching along the narrow defile. He at once concluded they were robbers, the neighbourhood being famous for their haunts. Durazzo, however, knew the watchword of Lamberti's company, and doubting not that the outlaws here were, in some way or other, connected with the men whom he had recently employed, entertained little fear of personal injury. Accordingly he did not conceal himself, but stood against a rock, which, from the nature of the place, the advancing horsemen would be compelled to pass. Nearer they came, and now turning a projecting angle of the valley,

they were thrown suddenly into view. Durazzo was entirely deceived in his supposition. The strong moonlight glanced upon superb armour, floating plumes, and the long lances of regular soldiers. A man arrayed from head to foot in Milan steel, rode in front; and from the attendance of two Esquires who bore his lance and shield, he was evidently a leader of no small distinction.

Durazzo's countenance, lately flushed with pride, became white as ashes. Whoever the horsemen were, he most ardently desired to shun them. He passed around the rock and would have fled; but his person having been seen, the soldiers called upon him to halt. He was not unheedful of the summons, for cowardice, at least, formed no part of Durazzo's character: he returned to his former station, and standing in front of the rock, folded his arms, like a man sternly resolved to abide and dare the issue.

The leader of the troopers had recognised the haughty Duke; the frame of the former shook

with intense passion,—the eagerness of long-hoarded hate. He mastered, however, the feelings that struggled for vent, and making a signal, his men surrounded Durazzo.

The proud brother of Joanna, the predicted future king, stood in the centre of a circle of spears ; and that circle gradually contracted, until the weapons gleamed almost close to his breast. He remained undaunted, glaring on the military Captain, while scorn curled his mustachioed lip.

“ Thou art in our power, Duke of Durazzo ! ” exclaimed Walter Courtenay.

“ And what mayest thou want of me ? marry, am I simple enough to ask the question ? as thou art a common robber, so doubtlessly thou wilt play the common cut-throat, unless I give thee my purse—here it is, well filled—now, allow me to pass.”

“ Duke, thou dost act rashly in renewing thine insults towards me. Thou knowest I am no robber, or cut-throat :—away with thy gold ! my

brave fellows shall not contaminate themselves with it. Thou art my mortal foe. Beneath the wide-spread Heaven I have no enemy whom I hate so greatly, and, at the same time, whom I hold so base as thou. Nay, my men, back! back! do not kill him!"

"I defy them and thee! Courtenay, do thy worst."

"Sir Duke, I am no assassin; but I rejoice that an opportunity is afforded me to meet thee in equal combat. Know, I was hastening, with a few of my men, to surprise a body of insurgents—traitors to the Queen of Naples; but the expedition shall be delayed until I have obtained full satisfaction for the foul injuries I have received at thy hands."

"Satisfaction? call it rather murder!" cried Durazzo. "Am I not alone? whilst thou art backed by a host of followers? they, in sooth, will scarcely see me conquer their leader; and whether I fail or triumph, death is equally certain."

Courtenay turned to his troop, and spoke as calmly as his indignant feelings would permit him.

“ Ye hear his words, soldiers ! that man hath insulted me—how I shall not here declare—but insulted me so deeply, and hath acted so false, and despicable a part, that he deserves only to be hung to the nearest tree like a dog. Yet I will treat him in honourable sort, and grant him every equality that the laws of single combat enjoin. Therefore, fall back, soldiers, on our main body, and leave me with the Duke of Durazzo alone. I will fight him with no advantage on my side. As surely as yonder moon shines in Heaven, one of us shall die. Therefore, men, attend to me—when ye shall hear a blast on my bugle, conclude that I am conqueror, and hasten on to bear the dead Durazzo to his home. If ye hear nothing, then know that your leader has fallen ; and, having tarried an hour, that the Duke may escape, return and bury me even beneath this sod. Do ye agree faithfully to perform my behest ? ”

The men, influenced by the chivalric spirit of the times, mutely acquiesced, and galloped back to the main body of Adventurers, who were reposing in their tents about a half-a-mile from the spot.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUEL.

I have no words ;
My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain,
Than terms can give thee out !

Shakspeare.

THE English Captain dismounted, and secured his horse to a tree. He advanced to Durazzo, who, with folded arms, displayed calm indifference, and defiance. Neither individual spoke for several minutes, but gazed fiercely on each other. Mutual enmity and rage inflamed their hearts ; for each, in his projects, considered himself thwarted and injured.

“ Duke of Durazzo, wilt thou explain thy conduct, and offer a befitting apology ? ”

“ I understand thee not.”

“Is thy memory then so shallow? Didst thou not but a few weeks since, when I was an inmate of the Queen’s Palace at Baiæ, didst thou not intercept a letter, and violating every law of honour and honesty, open the same, revealing its contents, and making me a jest—the object of most damning ridicule?”

“Pshaw! doth that constitute the sum of thy grievances?”

“And is it not sufficient? Thou didst thy utmost to injure me in the opinion of the Court; in the opinion of the Queen; and in the estimation of her—”

“Hold! beware!”

“Her I have dared to love.”

Durazzo laughed scornfully, turned on his heel, and appeared in the act of retiring.

“Nay, thou dost not leave me. Confess thou hast acted a most uncourteous, and dishonourable part.”

“I confess nothing, saving that thou art a presumptuous traitor. I opened thy billet ad-

dressed to the Princess Amalia, feeling myself authorized, in this instance, to transgress the rules of etiquette."

" Say, rather thou didst outrage every principle of justice and honour between man and man."

" I considered it my duty to expose thy audacity ; and thou mayst thank the lenity of the Queen that thou didst escape without forfeiture, imprisonment, or death itself."

" Thou canst speak plausibly, Duke ; but thy words cloak falsehood and cunning. To thy teeth I tell thee I have been meanly betrayed, and basely insulted ; and therefore require that satisfaction which one soldier, under such circumstances, may demand of another, however unequal in other respects their rank may be."

Courtenay cast off his breast-plate, that he might possess no advantage over his antagonist. He also unlaced the plates of steel on his arms, while he flung his helmet upon the turf ; so that in every vital part, he was even more uncovered and defenceless than Durazzo.

The brother of Joanna regarded his enemy with apparent composure, yet the spirit within was shaken and agitated. He did not experience personal fear, for he felt himself competent to cross swords with any man living; but his hopes were concentrated, and his thoughts fixed on one object. A throne was perpetually present to his imagination; and to win this he would have ventured his life in a hundred battles. But here was a private feud, an obscure quarrel, in which he might conquer without laurels, or fall without renown, throwing away for ever his chance of becoming a king. Shall he then wantonly risk a life dedicated to a career of glory? No, he was not a craven, yet he ardently desired to avoid fighting with the English soldier.

“Draw, Duke of Durazzo—I am ready.”

“Insolent varlet! but thy presumption is consistent with thy former conduct. Whom dost thou challenge? sheath thy sword, for mine I shall not draw.”

“ Not draw ? art thou then a coward, as well as a dishonourable man ? ”

“ Nay, thou mayst murder me ; no opprobrium in consequence will rest on my name.— But to measure swords with thee—I cannot so demean, so disgrace myself.”

Courtenay ground his teeth—his heart swelled with indignation ; and, with great difficulty, he restrained himself from springing on the speaker.

“ Marry, whom dost thou take me for, Duke ? ”

“ A man without rank or character—sprung, I ween, from the dregs of society ; whose father, very probably, was a sweeper of streets, or haply a felon hung for house-breaking.”

“ And thou art an illustrious Duke, a member of the Royal Family of Naples. But in spite of the fortuitous circumstance of thy birth, I tell thee thou art every thing that is base and villainous ! ”

“ Slave ! though thou art beneath my resentment, thou shalt dearly repent thy words.”

"Not until I am in thy power ; for this sod shall drink the life-blood of one of us."

Courtenay paced up and down, straining his drawn sword in his hand, and casting furtive glances at his enemy. He could not murder him, yet he was resolved to obtain vengeance. He ruminated on the most politic plan to compel Durazzo to a conflict, since taunts and threats seemed insufficient to provoke him to draw his sword. The Englishman suddenly stopped, and again confronted his foe.

"Thou wilt fight, Duke ; thou must and shalt."

"I repeat, I cannot so demean myself."

"Then thou dost quail, and art afraid to die."

"Get thee gone, varlet!—I pass on."

"Thou shalt pass first over my dead body : consummate knave ! designing traitor ! most mean and spiritless coward ! will nothing move thee ?"

The last words *did* move and sting Durazzo to madness, for, springing forwards, he seized

Courtenay by the throat. The fury, which hitherto lay smothered in his bosom, burst forth with terrific violence, and his whole frame was convulsed by the tempest within. He clutched at his short dagger, and, holding it aloft, was about to dash it into the Englishman's breast. But the latter was aware of the action; and, as the tiger by a desperate effort will free itself from the constrictor, he succeeded in grappling with, and thrusting his assailant from him. Durazzo reeled backwards, and Courtenay gave a loud laugh of exultation and contempt.

“ So thou, I perceive, would'st be the murderer, sir Duke, and not myself. I have baffled thy purpose, however, this time. Shame upon thee to have recourse to the assassin's steel!—Nay, thou dost not escape me now—by Heaven! I will run thee through the body, unless thou dost instantly draw a manlier weapon.”

As he spoke he struck Durazzo on the shoulder with the flat of his sword. This last indignity was not to be supported even by the politi-

and calculating Durazzo. He trembled with passion through every fibre of his frame. The reflection that his thousand schemes of ambition might terminate in death, had no influence upon him now : all considerations were forgotten, and merged in the wild impulse of the moment ; and advancing from the bank against which he had been dashed, he instantly crossed swords with his antagonist.

The combatants were well matched both in strength and skill. Courtenay having won his desire, and being fairly engaged with his enemy, cooled from his late excitement. He was collected and calm, as though he smarted not beneath the sense of wrongs. But Durazzo every moment grew more impatient and fiery.

The Englishman, beneath the wild and powerful strokes of his stalwart foe, suffered himself to be beaten back. Probably, had he used his utmost endeavours, he would have failed in maintaining his ground. But no sooner did he perceive symptoms of flagging on the part of his

opponent, than he sprang upon him with the agility of an antelope. His passes were rapid as lightning, while he wheeled on every side, perplexing and harassing the royal Duke. Thrice he might have taken his life, but chose rather to disable, than mortally wound him.

Foiled at every point, and panting for breath, Durazzo slowly retrograded. Still he disputed every inch of ground. He sank on one knee, yet he fought dragging himself here and there, and parrying the thrusts of his antagonist; until wholly exhausted, and unable to sway his weapon longer, he sank, with a curse, upon the turf.

Courtenay bent over his fallen enemy. Mercy that minute was not on his brow, but the blackness of concentrated hate. The man who had injured him so deeply; who had caused him to be held up a mark for revilings, and laughter, was in his power. He had burned to take his life; and all that hatred and vengeance desired was granted to his prayer.—He blew a shrill

blast on his horn, and planting his foot on the breast of his adversary, pointed his sword at his heart.

"Thou yieldest—say thou'art vanquished, or by my wrongs, thou diest!"

"Take my life, if thou wilt, but I make no concessions unto thee!"

"Though I abhor, I do not despise thee. Thou art crafty, yet valiant; but thy nature is so debased, that I should render mankind a service by sweeping thee from the earth."

"Strike on, then! strike on!"

At this moment, in answer to the bugle's summons, a tramp of horses was heard, and Courtney's troop of adventurers galloped into the ravine. When they perceived the result of the duel, they uttered a deafening shout. It sounded strangely in that lone and beauteous spot, where beneath the trembling moon, the cascade only should murmur, and the low winds sigh over the crumbling ruins of classic antiquity.

The horsemen formed in a circle around their

leader, and the prostrate Duke. The latter looked up on his foe, not beseeching mercy, but scowling defiance ; haughty, though fallen, and unsubdued in soul, though vanquished in body.

“ Soldiers !” cried Courtenay, “ ye behold the issue of our strife, and by the laws of combat I am now at liberty to slay him whom I call my mortal enemy.”

“ Spare him not, Captain !” cried several of the troopers in a breath.

“ Had he been a coward, I should, in truth, satisfy now the calls of vengeance ; but the Duke is a brave, though I fear me, an evil disposed man. Moreover, soldiers, let us recollect that he is brother by marriage to the good Queen whom we serve. His life, then, shall be granted him—Duke of Durazzo, arise !”

The vanquished Durazzo stood before the troop—not abashed, as most men might have been in such a situation, but collected and proud. He returned no thanks for the clemency shown him. He uttered no word to any one present ;

but, on being informed that he was at liberty to pursue his way, he strode from among them, and climbing the path that led into the forest, was soon lost amidst the black pine trees.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PIRATES.

There be land rats, and water rats—water thieves, and land thieves—I mean pirates.

Shakspeare.

A FLEET of Pirate-gallies had long infested the Neapolitan shores that border the Adriatic. The want of an efficient naval force on the part of the Italians, favoured these marauders of the deep; and they were accustomed to effect sudden landings, pillage villages and towns, and retire to their barks with much valuable booty.

In the seaport of Brundisi, a more than ordinary alarm had been raised. This town, as the classic reader will know, is the ancient Brundisium, so celebrated by Roman epicures for its exquisite oysters. The pirates, in formidable

array, were now hovering off the coast, and their hostile intentions admitted of no doubt. Some of the inhabitants concealed themselves with their money in under-ground cellars; hoping thereby to elude their avaricious enemies. Others fled to the neighbouring mountains, with all the valuables they were able to carry. Nevertheless, a considerable number remained in the town; they had assembled in the market-place, cowering, and huddling together, as if each considered his security depended on pressing closely to his neighbour.

This patriotic body consisted chiefly of oyster-merchants, clothiers, and vineyard proprietors; and they began eagerly to consult on the best measures to be adopted for the defence of their property, and the protection of their wives and daughters. The chief man among them, who was the Podestà of the town, ascended the steps that led to the principal church, and harangued the terror-stricken multitude. He advised them to seize whatever arms they could find, and

lining the shore, boldly to await, and resolutely repel the lawless invaders.

But the stout Podestà's words failed to instil courage into the drooping hearts of the Brundisians. The ancient and warlike spirit of the place was no more; and the men, with one accord, declared that they would risk their lives in their fishing-boats, gather oysters in storms, and if called upon, travel bare-foot and fasting, to any cross or shrine in Italy; but as for fighting with those rough and desperate seamen, they dared not, they would not attempt any thing so dangerous.

"Offer them a thousand barrels of fresh oysters!" cried a rotund merchant among the crowd, "on condition that they sail past our town, and do us no injury."

The Podestà shook his head, doubtful whether such a gift, however excellent, would content the pirates. A ship load of lobsters and eels, was next proposed, together with twenty mules' burden of oranges. But the Podestà was for

warlike measures, and at length carried it by vote, that a messenger should be dispatched to Frontino, a village about six miles distant, where he knew a troop of Condottieri was then stationed. They would offer the soldiers one thousand florins, if they would gallop on without delay, and protect the good town of Brundisi against the threatened descent of the barbarous enemy.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE YOUNG VICTIM.

"Fond memory weeps o'er friends of vanished hours,
As on a foreign shore he sinks to die;
Bright dreams of sunny fields, and greenwood bowers,
Crowd on his heart, and wake the bitter sigh."

THE brief but fierce conflict was over. The Pirates had abandoned their design upon the seaport of Brundisi, and retired to their galleys in confusion and dismay. Yet many a comrade they left behind them: turbaned Arab, and bearded Turk, pressed the shore, biting the flints in their last agony, and howling curses upon the Christian. But others, less furious in their dying moments, were seen raising themselves with difficulty upon their knees, and, with their faces towards Mecca, they called upon their prophet Mohammed, and muttered sentences from the

Koran. They thought of the breezy bowers, the amber streams, and black-eyed Houris of Paradise; and, deeming its bliss secure, that, in a few minutes, they should enter its crystal gates, light flashed into their dying eyes, enthusiasm banished the sense of pain; and, with a smile on their white lips, they clasped their hands, and expired.

The inhabitants of the ancient town hastened from their gates to greet their gallant deliverers. Their own valour had failed them; their houses might have been despoiled, and their daughters carried off by those lawless wanderers of the deep; but the English Condottiero and his men had defeated the rovers, and relieved the honest burghers from every apprehension.

Beneath the acacia and orange trees that rose in various quarters of the town, the military adventurers were regaling themselves. The natives showed them all courtesy and hospitality, as well they might. They bestowed on them presents, joined with them in draining the

wine-cup, and afterwards sang Italian songs, and danced in jovial circles to the pipe and guitar.

But where was the English Captain, Walter Courtenay?

Quitting the revellers, he had passed the gate, and was wandering along the shore. Although it had been but the miniature of a battle, he sighed to behold its victims. Friend and enemy lay around him, for some of his own soldiers had fallen. None now exhibited signs of life, for his care had removed to the town all such of whom any hopes of recovery were entertained.

Quiet brooded over the scene; the sun was sinking behind the woody Apennine: the yellow beam lay in long lines on the slumbering waves, and revealed the far convent shining on the rocky hill-top, like hope on the brow of adversity.—Courtenay exulted not in the victory which he had gained; but sadness was upon his spirit. He wandered from corpse to corpse, examining the features of each, as though he was anxious

to discover some particular follower or friend among the dead.

“Can he have fallen?” he murmured to himself; “I saw him in the thick of the fight, yet he has not returned to the town. My brave boy! Heaven grant that thou art still living!”

Courtenay passed near a priest, who continued to hold his cross over the body of an English trooper, although life was extinct. He was breathing prayers for the rest of the departed soul. That father was a disinterested, a sincere Christian, and Courtenay felt his heart warm towards him for his pious exertions.

The English Captain left behind him that portion of the beach which had been the scene of the conflict; and projecting rocks hid from his view the old town of Brundisi. Suddenly he stopped, for a faint groan met his ear. Gazing in the direction of the sound, he perceived, at a short distance, a soldier stretched upon the sand. He lay beneath the shelter of a rock, and, close beside him, gushed a slender stream, which,

having burst from the cliffs above, was pursuing its sparkling way to the ocean.

The young soldier now languidly raised himself upon one arm, and, scooping up the water in the hollow of his hand, drank eagerly, and dashed the cooling fluid over his temples. His steel cap, which had been thrown aside, allowed his long hair to fall in rich brown masses, wet with his own blood, and the dew of the bubbling rivulet. Apparently exhausted by the action of drinking, he again sank on the beach.

In a minute Courtenay stood by his side: it was as he feared;—his young follower, his favourite Esquire, was mortally wounded. His fall being unnoticed in the tumult of the fray, he had been left among the slaughtered. Reviving, however, in a slight degree, the stripling had reached this spot, but was unable to proceed further.

Courtenay addressed him, and, at the well-known accents, Trevanion opened his eyes, while a faint smile played on his lips.

“ My brave fellow ! would that I had found thee before ! but I trust I am yet in time to render thee assistance.”

The youth pressed the speaker’s hand in token of gratitude, but, at the same time, he intimated that his kindness would avail him nothing.

“ But I will bear thee in my arms to the town, where some skilful Chirurgeon shall dress thy wounds.”

“ Raise me not !” said Trevanion faintly ; “ that pang I cannot bear : if you would not have me die this moment, place me again by the fountain !”

Courtenay, perceiving the hopeless condition of the sufferer, yielded to his desire ; and, with the crystal wave, again cooled his parched lips, and burning forehead. He sighed as he thought of the blighted prospects of that young soldier, to whom the future had seemed fraught with every pleasure, and had promised every success. And was his bright career to be closed so soon ? was the sun of life, ere it had half way attained

its meridian, to be quenched in darkness for ever?—" Oh, war! war!" he groaned, " this cometh of thee!" and he inwardly cursed the profession of arms which he followed.

Courtenay sat on the ground, and the dying youth laid his head upon his knees. He watched over him, as a mother may bend over her expiring child. Much has been said of woman's sorrow for her lover in distress; yet it is blent, perhaps, with a certain degree of selfishness; for she reflects that if he be gone, her lot will be desolate and wretched. But there is something holy, pure, and disinterested, in the compassion and anguish which one man may feel for the suffering of another, from whose death or life, he will reap no benefit.

" Courtenay," said Trevanion, gazing on that bronzed but noble face which bent in silence over him; " thou hast been to me a father; how shall I thank thee for all thy kindness?—thou hast thought me, perhaps, in my lighter hours, unheedful of the past, it may be, ungrateful; but oh! such seeming belied my heart!"

“Talk not thus, Trevanion; thou art nothing beholden to me; and as for my regard, which has never changed since the hour I met thee, all who knew thee loved thee alike. But despond not—thou shalt yet live, my boy. I will dispatch yonder peasant who now approaches, for a medical man.”

And the Italian, having received Courtenay's orders, hastened to the town.

“Let me talk to thee, Captain,” continued the young soldier, “while yet I may. My thoughts, now life's scene closes upon me, turn to my parents and my home.—I have informed thee, that, on the downfall of our family, my father resided in a cottage by the lake of Ullswater. There I passed my childhood. Oh! that I had not deserted him in his poverty, and sorrow! but it is useless now to lament; I cannot obtain his forgiveness,—I cannot receive his blessing!”

Courtenay would willingly have banished such reflections from the youth's mind. He knew

that Trevanion, urged by romance, and the spirit of adventure, had quitted England against the will of his parent ; and he had intended shortly to have impressed upon him the expediency of his returning home.

“ Let me dwell a moment on the happy hours of childhood !” continued the stripling, his face brightening, but it was a wan and melancholy lustre that illumined his eye. “ On the mountain, along the shore, and over the glassy lake, my fancy carries me. There, with my book, I beguiled the hour ; with my rod and angle, I cherished not the dreams of ambition ; and, steering my skiff over the summer waves, care, war, and sorrow, were nothing to me.”

Courtenay was deeply affected. Though no such retrospect was his, he could enter fully into the feelings of his unfortunate young follower.

“ But I am departing !” murmured Trevanion ; “ my thoughts must no longer linger on earth.— Courtenay I regret to leave thee ; I mourn, likewise, to leave one who dwells by that far lake—

the dream of my youth, the beacon of love and hope, on which the eyes of my soul are now fixed. My father, also, when I think of him, old, desolate, and in sorrow; who mourned for his only son when he forsook him; who wept over me—my father! my poor father!”

Trevanion pressed his forehead with his feeble hands; and though he was too faint to sob, his tears fell on the sand beneath.

Courtenay was raising him, and about to utter words of consolation, when he perceived the apothecary whom the Italian peasant had summoned. The professional man, having examined his patient, shook his head, and whispered in Courtenay's ear that the case admitted of no hope. To remove him, he said, would only accelerate his death; and he kindly offered to remain there until he should die, if the Captain wished to depart.

But Courtenay, in deep dejection, refused to quit the spot; and the disciple of Galen, having administered a soothing potion to the sufferer,

took his station at a little distance. The man, with much coolness, commenced some astrological calculations, and concluded by sketching the surrounding scenery; for to the profession of a physician, he added that of a painter.

The youth evidently was sinking fast: the blood did not flow so profusely from his side, but trickled, drop by drop, upon the shore; and this betokened that life's sands were nearly run.

Recovering in a slight degree, he placed his hand in Courtenay's, and feebly spoke:

"Thou believest in another world; I have often heard thee express thy religious sentiments. For crime committed here, thou dost think we shall receive retribution hereafter. Many errors shall I have to answer for, yet none, methinks, will weigh so heavily against me, as my disobedience and cruelty to my parents."

"But, Trevanion," said Courtenay, wishing to console him on this point, and reflecting that the youth's conduct, in some respects, resembled his own, although he had not forsaken a father, but

a guardian: "thou dost reproach thyself too severely. Thy family was ruined, thy patrimony gone; thou didst burn for the profession of arms; and a desire to see the world, and visit foreign courts, led thee to Italy: and, through all, I dare assert, thou didst love thy parent."

"Love him? Oh, yes, yes—but I should have remained with him, to avenge his wrongs, to console him under his misfortunes.—But it is over—God forgive me!—in another state, if I am permitted, I will visit him; I will hover around him, his guardian angel; and he who forsook him when living, shall be by his side for ever!"

The filial affection of the dying young man subdued and melted Courtenay's heart. For himself, he had never known the care and love of parents; yet he could imagine how many strong and endearing associations, in the bosom of the virtuous son, must be linked with their memory.

"My noble boy!" he said, "doubt not—fear not—thou wilt be happy. A God of mercy will

forgive slight offences in consideration of such virtue as thine. Oh! that my heart were as pure! that my life were as innocent! recline thy head thus—now, Trevanion, art thou more at ease?”

“Nay, the body matters little—that will soon be dust. My end is near now; yet the pang of my wound thrills me no longer; a heaviness, a dizziness come over me—objects swim before my eyes—stoop nearer, Courtenay, for I can scarcely behold thee.”

“My friend, my more than brother! be comforted—I am with thee.—Is there aught that I can do for thee—when—when—”

Courtenay's voice failed, for he was choking with emotion.

“Yes,” murmured Trevanion, “should'st thou ever visit England, see my father—tell him how I sorrowed for him—how I repented of my past conduct—and that I died calling upon his name—loving, blessing him!”

“I will not fail to perform thy request; but

not more deeply, more sincerely than myself, will that father sorrow for thy loss."

The Englishman bent nearer; he felt the young soldier's brow; it was cold as ice; he placed his hand upon his heart; it had ceased to beat!

Then burst forth Courtenay's feelings which, before, he had, in a measure, controlled; nor was it derogatory to manhood, that his affection and sorrow found vent in a flood of tears.

CHAPTER XX.

THE APPROACH OF A CRISIS.

" Oh ! give me love ! its raptures still be mine ;
The last of all earth's raptures I'll resign."

WE must allow a period of some months to elapse from the date of our previous chapters. The glow of summer was gone ; the fervour of mellow Autumn was on its decline. The forest had assumed its golden mantle, and the winged inhabitants of the bough, to stream and valley, poured forth a graver, a more plaintive strain.

Poets and philosophers have ever been partial to the commencement and decline of the year. It would be difficult to decide which of the two periods has received the greater share of their eulogiums. Spring may be more exhilarating

to genius; it may awaken livelier thoughts, and tenderer emotions; it may be the fit season for love, and all its concomitant pleasures. But Autumn yields to the mind a deeper tone; it gives rise to a loftier and more solemn train of thoughts. Charmed by its grave and sombre prospects, the poet more readily melts into the pathetic, or soars into the sublime. The spirit of the philosopher, also, is more collected, and his meditations are more profound.

There is something so soothing, yet fraught with regret; so elevating, yet so melancholy, in the prospect of nature's slow and beautiful decay, that minds of a dignified order, as well as those of a pensive and meditative cast must ever, amid the revolving seasons, give the preference to Autumn.

We shall now briefly describe the situation of a few of our characters.

Louis, the unfortunate lover of Queen Joanna, was in Rome. The splendour of the Vatican; the grandeur of St. Peter's; the majesty of the

Seven Hills; the dying glory of ruined arch, and crumbling amphitheatre; all offered means by which he might divert his thoughts from their one bitter channel; but how far his misplaced passion was subdued, we are unable, as yet, to inform the reader.

Camillo, however, his devoted attendant, enjoyed the visit to his native City, beyond any description that language might give. He amused his taciturn master by recitals of achievements performed by his ancestors when Rome was in her glory. Each ruin had its fable, or its tale of truth. Now he apostrophized an obelisk, now mourned over a prostrate column; and, on the Palatine-Hill, he so far forgot himself, that he commenced declaiming, as if surrounded as formerly by his awe-struck pupils.

Prince Andrea and his Court had returned to Naples; and Queen Joanna, Amalia, and Philippa, were inmates of the Castel-Nuovo, a magnificent but gloomy structure.

The English Captain had not attended the

Court since his departure from Baiæ ; yet fame loudly trumpeted his military achievements. He had rendered signal service to the Queen by the reduction of several rebel barons ; he stormed their strong holds, and razed them to the ground. He expelled the robbers from their forests, and, as we have seen, repulsed a host of Saracen pirates, who had landed to pillage the rich town of Brundisi. Yet, strange to say, unlike other Condottieri of the period, for these services he demanded no gold ; honour and renown seemed to be all that the chivalric Englishman coveted. He did not, however, debar his soldiers from sharing occasionally rich prizes and spoils.

After various disputes which had occasioned much delay, a bull was at length granted by the Pope for the coronation of Andrea and Joanna. The Hungarian faction had so far succeeded in its schemes of usurping the government of the Nation, that Joanna and her husband were to reign conjointly, the latter being dignified with the title of King. The twentieth of September

was the day appointed for the ceremony of the coronation. Whether through the tortuous intrigues of Durazzo, or whether it was of their own free will, did not appear, but a fortnight before the day mentioned above, the royal parties left Naples to pass the intervening time near the pleasant town of Aversa.

A spacious convent, beautifully situated amidst gardens of cypress and myrtle-trees, was chosen for their temporary residence. It was the last spot that fate should have selected for the scene of such a fearful tragedy as was about to be enacted.

The Prince and Queen had already spent several days in this delightful retreat. The former had entirely recovered from the alarm which he experienced at Baiæ; he had dismissed his body-guard, thrown aside his plate armour, and passed his hours in laughter, wine, and wassail. The latter, although she had regained her accustomed serenity, was by no means cheerful; gloom and despondency seemed to

steep her spirit, as if coming events had already cast their shadows on her soul.

It was a calm afternoon ; the sun, although he no longer poured a flood of radiance from his autumnal urn, shone with considerable fervour. In a retired part of the convent garden, beneath over-arching cypress trees, Joanna and Amalia were walking. Each remained silent, wrapped in meditations of her own. Joanna appeared the same beautiful majestic being, as when we last beheld her ; but a few short months had wrought a great change in the person and character of Amalia. Her eye no longer sparkled with girlish and reckless gaiety : her cheek, which once the slightest incident woke into dimples, like a breeze ruffling a summer lake, rarely betrayed a smile. Her step was slow, her brow pensive and thoughtful ; scenes of festivity had lost their charm ; while solitude, once so irksome, seemed the only thing calculated to soothe and gratify her spirit. Yes, no circumstance so affects the mind, and metamorphoses the whole

character of woman, as the dawning of the passion of love.

It has been said that love is not so constant in its idolatry, or so productive of unmixed pleasure, in early youth, as in riper years. The stripling, and the girl, feel an impulse, headlong, irresistible; their passion is based on charms of person, rather than on qualities of mind; it examines not—reflects not—and, in its intoxication, would run into any danger, and possess its object in spite of all that prudence, reason, or religion might urge.

But love, which is a later produce, if we may so speak, of the heart's soil, though less luxuriant, is more deeply, and permanently rooted; and like the oak on the mountain top, the blight of misfortune, and the storms of fate, can render it no injury; but still, with revolving years, it strengthens and expands.

Amalia's passion was neither entirely the one nor the other described above. It partook of an intermediate nature. True, this was her first

love, and, so far, it was wild, strong, enthusiastic. But being in her nineteenth year, reflection and reason began to exert their influence over her ; Reality to oppose the warm colourings of Imagination and Romance ; nor was she altogether blind to consequences.

The fair companions walked side by side : they seemed to take no notice of the fountains which played near them ; the golden squirrels that leaped from tree to tree, or the bright-winged birds, that, scared by their approach, winged away from the boughs above their heads.

At length Joanna, pointing at a violet which was almost concealed by the surrounding moss, addressed her relative.

“ Seest thou yon little flower, Amalia ? the gaudy tulip is no more ; the sun-flower hath bowed its pride ; and the leaves of the gorgeous rose are shed. But this violet still blooms ; the wind reaches it not in its shrine of moss.”

“ It is truly a sweet flower ;” observed Amalia.

“ Thus the exalted, and famed, kings and

queens," pursued Joanna, "are exposed to envy and slander; they wither beneath their chilling breath. But the lowly, secure in their humility, live on unpersecuted and happy. Would I were like yon violet, Amalia!"

"In like manner," rejoined the girl, "the nightingale sings to the proud rose, until intruded on by listeners; and the butterfly flaunts around the gaudy tulip, until caught by wanton hands. But the perfumed wind breathes unceasing music, kissing unmolested that violet's dewy lip; and the beautiful night-fly slumbers in security upon its purple bosom."

"And what would thy simile aim at, my sweet girl?" asked the Queen.

"This truth, Joanna—the lowly born, and obscure, are allowed to love as their feelings prompt them; no eyes keep on their actions, a hateful *espionage*; no cold conventionalities, no disparity in rank, bar and crush their natural affections; would I were like yon violet, Joanna!"

"Still do thy thoughts dwell on scenes that

are passed ?” said the Queen. “ Well, I cannot chide thee now ; since I myself should have forgotten the persecutions of traitors, who, probably, exist no longer. But it is a sweet flower, Amalia—gather it—there, place it in my bosom.”

They walked on : the conversation, just recited, may serve to elucidate, better perhaps than a lengthened description, the state of their mutual feelings. After a short pause, Joanna again spoke.

“ In two days, as thou art aware, Amalia, the august ceremony takes place, which invests Andrea and myself with the crown of Naples : yet I can with truth say, that I look forward to it with no pleasure—with no satisfaction.”

“ Saints ! my fair cousin, and what may be the reason ? yet need I ask the question, when he who should have been crowned with thee is far distant, and Andrea becomes daily more indolent and sensual ?”

“ Ha ! wherefore speak you thus ?” cried the Queen ; “ have I not entreated, commanded you

never to refer to Louis again ?—I thought I had forgotten him, and I *will* forget him !” she turned away her head to hide the tears which were stealing down her cheek.

“ Pardon me, Joanna : my own sorrows spring but from one source, and I am too inclined to imagine that the grief of others must have a similar origin.”

“ Amalia,” said the Queen in a tremulous voice ; “ last night I had a fearful dream ; although no believer in omens or visions, I cannot but think that my dream prognosticates some direful calamity.”

“ Calamity unto whom, Joanna ?”

“ Draw near and listen—no, I cannot tell it thee ; I would not fill thy gentle bosom with fears, that, after all, have no ground to authorize them. Enough to say, that my dream related to Andrea : it seemed to intimate that some awful event was about to transpire ; that in the midst of feasting and pleasure, the bolt of vengeance was to descend—the trump of death to sound.”

Joanna paused, and trembled. " Yes, something whispers me that traitors still surround us; who they may be I know not—but, thank God! we quit this spot to-morrow."

To-morrow? thus mortals reason,—they consider not what may spring from the womb of to-morrow! they form resolutions; they project schemes; they lay themselves down in confidence on their pillows, nor deem that the arrow of fate is on the wing, and that on the morrow their eyes may open in an eternal world.

Amalia pressed the Queen no further on the subject of her dream; and now they arrived at a little summer-house, formed of myrtles interwoven with jessamine; a fountain played in front, and rustic benches were ranged within. They entered and seated themselves. The murmur of the waters was grateful and refreshing. The silver dew, after it had sprinkled moss and shell, was gathered into a tiny channel, which ran dancing and sparkling around the arbour. A small bird, tame and motionless, sat on a

neighbouring orange-tree, and poured forth a tremulous plaintive note, as if to bewail the declining year.

They remained without speaking; each had her arm around the other's neck; their thoughts were wandering far away from the scene around them. They were not happy,—they were not completely sorrowful; but sunk in that subduing melancholy peculiar to reflective, and ardent minds.

“Joanna,” said Amalia, breaking the silence: “thou must encourage these gloomy forebodings no longer; for myself, I anticipate the splendour, the gaiety of the approaching coronation with extreme interest. The gorgeous liveries of the foreign ambassadors; the procession of the great officers of the state; the Pope's Legate, and the Bishops in their full ecclesiastical vestments; the music, the shouts, and the waving of a thousand banners—yes, it will be a magnificent spectacle. Would that *one*, Joanna, were permitted to take a part in the pageant! I maintain

that his sentence is severe and unmerited—no, no, I question not the justice of your decision—forgive me, dear Queen, forgive me !”

“ My poor girl !” cried Joanna, “ will thy thoughts be for ever recurring to this Englishman, who must no more appear at our Court ? Methinks, after so brief an acquaintance, it would be an easy task to renounce and forget him.”

“ Alas ! I have not thy philosophy, Joanna : wherever I may be, his presence, like some spirit, haunts me : I cannot forbear thinking of him—I cannot forbear loving him. But instruct me, Joanna, and I will follow thy precepts. I will mention his name no more—I will endeavour to banish every thought, every idea connected with him ; I will—Oh ! no I cannot—I cannot !”

The disconsolate girl laid her head upon Joanna’s shoulder, and sobbed aloud.

“ Amalia !” sighed the Queen, fondly embracing her—“ would that I could comfort thee, my beloved, my poor Amalia !”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HUSBAND'S SECRET.

Thus high and graceful was her gait—
Her heart was tender to her mate :
Her mate ?—stern Hassan, who was he ?
Alas ! that name is not for thee.

The Gipsy.

Not far from the town which was now honoured by the presence of the Queen of Naples, the Duke of Durazzo had a private residence ; it was situated in a pastoral valley on the site of a mansion which had once belonged to the illustrious but profligate Sylla. The present owner was a man of less genius than the Roman, but as grasping and daringly ambitious as he, while his spirit was doubly dark, unprincipled, and cruel.

The autumnal sun, which was shedding its soft beams on the Celestine Gardens, where we left Joanna and Amalia, was at the same moment, glancing through the casement, and warming the chequered marble floor of Durazzo's antique and classic hall. There sat the plotting, moody Duke, his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes fixed on the armour that gleamed on the opposite wall, and in which he was wont to array himself when departing for battle. The gentle and beautiful woman, who had linked her lot to a man possessed of no one opinion, no one sympathy in common with her, was wistfully watching his perturbed and altering features.

She knew by various signs, his sleepless nights, his abstracted air, and his frequent mutterings, that he was a participator in some daring, and dangerous plot. She had not ventured, as yet, to beg him to unfold his secret to her; even an allusion to his altered demeanour might tend to awaken those passions, which, too frequently on the slightest provocation, burst in violence even upon herself.

A child about three years of age was sporting in the hall; and now, with his laughing eyes, and bright sunny curls, he ran up to his father's side. Durazzo took no notice of him. The child endeavoured to climb his knee, and played with the jewelled handle of his sword. But suddenly the rude thrust, the dark scowl on the father's brow, sent him back shrinking and terrified to his mother. Maria, we have already stated, was Joanna's only sister, and consequently, in the event of the Queen's decease without issue, would succeed to the throne of Naples. She was much younger than Durazzo; yet in spite of his morose temper, selfish ambition, and undoubted crimes, she entertained for him an affection, so Neapolitan writers have recorded, beyond the ordinary love of woman.

"Durazzo!" said Maria rising, and timidly approaching the ruminating Duke; "thou knowest that I have no wish to pry into thy secrets; that I would not interfere with that which does not concern me—but I can keep silence no longer:

thy anxious looks, thy gloomy restless cogitations, occasion me deep distress—unfold the cause of thy uneasiness—the object of my life is to serve thee—Durazzo, am I not worthy of trust?”

“No woman is worthy of trust!” answered the Duke sternly.

“But I am—Oh! have I ever given thee reason to suppose that my nature is false? that I could be untrue to one whom I love like thee? no, she who braved the anger of friends; she who did fly with thee when a king sued for her hand,* would never divulge that which might be committed to her keeping. Engines of torture might wring this spirit from its clay, but, they would draw forth no word that might betray, might injure my husband!”

“Well, I believe thou art a fond faithful fool, despite the hollowness of thy sex;” said Durazzo, drawing his young wife towards him, and im-

* The king of Hungary made overtures of marriage to Maria, but she fled clandestinely from Castle-Nuovo with Durazzo.

printing a kiss on her cheek. "Know, then, I am occupied in mind, I am troubled, I dream, I plan, for thy sake."

"For me?" echoed Maria in surprise.

"Yes, foolish one,—should'st like to be a Queen?"

He cast a side-long glance at his wife, half mirth, half bitterness—he would ascertain how she brooked the idea his words suggested.

"What canst thou mean? Durazzo—thou dost well know that so long as my elder sister lives, the crown of Naples cannot be possessed by us."

"Speak not too confidently on that point—imagine thy sister guilty of a heinous crime, and driven from her kingdom by her indignant subjects—what then? thou wilt occupy her place on the throne, and I shall be called on to govern with thee."

"Good Heavens! Durazzo, dost thou again refer to that murderous attack upon Prince Andrea at Baiæ? I conceived the question set

at rest, and that not a shadow of suspicion attached to Queen Joanna.”

“Marry, though her guilt, in my opinion, was sufficiently evident, I did not intend making allusion to the affair at Baiæ:” and Durazzo ominously shook his head, as a man may do who has some secret of grave importance locked up in his breast, but which he dares not disclose.

“It is difficult for me to believe my sister a murderess;” said Maria; “yet I do not pretend to place my judgment, or penetration, in competition with thy own; and if Joanna be really what thou dost deem her, though she be my sister, I would not seek to screen her from punishment.”

“Thou hast spoken nobly, and above thy sex, Maria;” said Durazzo, warming, and unbending from his late reserve. “Believe me, thy sister so loathes her husband, and is so attached to the minion Louis, that she is racking her brains, night and day, and employing every means in her power to rid herself of the obnoxious Andrea.”

" Alas ! then, is it not our duty to protect the unfortunate ?"

" Of a truth it is—and I ponder deeply how I shall shield the unoffending Andrea against the power of his enemies ; how I shall impeach and dethrone her whose licentious conduct renders her unworthy to reign."

Maria shuddered, as the prospect of a terrible revolution rose on her imagination.

" My wife, it is time that I should speak to thee of these things ; for I have sworn to place thee on the forfeited throne of thy worthless sister ; ay, by the hosts of Heaven ! by the spirits below ! by the blood I have quaffed in ratification of my oath ! thou shalt be a queen, and I a king !"

The gentle lady trembled at the daring and fearful words uttered by her husband. She coveted not crown or sceptre—peace, security, to love and to be loved, was all that her mild and unaspiring nature desired.

" Durazzo ! my life, my lord !" she cried ;
" pause, ere thou dost rush on any desperate

measure. We are happier, believe me, far happier in our present condition, than if we were king and queen. Should my sister prove herself unworthy of her exalted station, let others dethrone her—not her brother : for if we be instrumental in causing her downfall, and ascend her throne, will not the world brand us as usurpers?”

“ Let it brand us ! I defy the world—I only feel I was born to be a king.”

In spite of the declaration of her husband, that Joanna was striving to compass the death of Andrea ; in spite of the trust which she reposed in one whom she sincerely loved, fearful thoughts sprang to life in the bosom of Maria. Urged on by ambition, could Durazzo himself be meditating the removal of Andrea ?—yet she dared not for worlds breathe a suspicion that he could stoop to act the part of an assassin.

“ I have said, Maria, that it is time I should school thee, since thou wilt be my partner in

power. Now, when the throne shall become vacant, thou wilt not blench, or be of a timid heart, but mount boldly, and assume thy right—which is the crown I shall place on thy head—why dost tremble, silly one ?”

“ Durazzo, forgive me—but I wish not to be a Queen.”

“ Fool !” cried the Duke sternly, as he gripped her arm ; “ not thy wishes, but my commands shall be attended to. I see the inevitable issue of events : the Queen’s criminal passion will be the cause of some dire catastrophe, that will convulse the nation, and herald a revolution ; but come what will—let my enemies say what they choose of me, thou wilt be true to thy husband.”

“ I swear it, my dear lord.”

“ Nor reveal to living soul a word that hath now passed between us ?”

“ Never !”

Durazzo was so fully assured of the affection and fidelity of his wife, that he did not for a

moment doubt her strict adherence to her promise. And now he arose, as about to depart.

"Wilt thou leave me so soon, Durazzo?—brief, indeed, is thy visit to thy wife and child—tarry, dear love, until the morrow."

"No, I am for Aversa."

"But why to-night?"

"I mistrust that woman, thy sister—mine ear hath overheard her secret counsels—some plot she is hatching against me; I would be present to watch the movements of herself and minions."

"Oh! must I ever be doomed to live in doubt and fear! if there be danger, go not to Aversa—but why those angry looks?—I only seek thy welfare—I only implore thee to be heedful of thy safety. If tempted too strongly, thou dost—"

"What?"

"Fall into error."

"And so gain for thee a crown."

"Durazzo!"

She fixed her eye—a suspicious woman's bright and piercing eye full on her husband, and she strove to read that dark inscrutable soul.

“Go not to Aversa to-night—as thou art the father of yonder innocent—as thou dost love me—go not!”

“And wherefore?”

Maria clung convulsively to his arm, still looking up into his face:

“Danger is there!”

“Pshaw! however the Queen may plot, I defy her, and her parasites. I tell thee my presence is needed; I have state business, also, that must be attended to.”

“Shall we ever again meet in peace?”

“Yes, so thou prove not faithless to me—so thou dost not join my enemies.”

“Never anticipate that. I am thine in joy, and in sorrow—I will cling to thee in crime—I will love thee though thy hand should be raised to take my own life.”

She wept wildly in his arms;—that evil man

stooped and kissed away her tears. His callous heart, for a moment, was moved at the devotion of that fond trusting being ; he placed her on a couch, and whispered in her ear words of consolation and love ; but, presently, flinging that unwonted weakness from him, he strode from the apartment, and, mounting his steed, rode off, followed by his usual train of pages and men-at-arms, for the town of Aversa.

CHAPTER XXII.

S U S P E N S E .

L'assassinat du Roi André est un des plus grands évènements, et des plus singuliers du quatorzième siècle.

De Sade.

THE moon had concealed her silver brow behind a veil of clouds; no star was visible; and ominous gloom, like the wing of some demon, brooded over the face of nature.

The midnight prayers of the monks were concluded in the Celestine Convent at Aversa. Each father had crept to his cheerless and solitary cell; and silence, deep and unbroken, reigned though the spacious Norman building.

Within those walls, slumbered a Prince and Queen; the one heavily and dreamless, in consequence of his recent intoxication; the other calmly

as an angel, if angelic natures repose; the consciousness of crime weighed not upon her spirit to perturb her visions; sleep does not spread a gentlier, a downier wing above the sealed lids of infantile innocence, than he waved over the couch of the slumbering Joanna.

The Duke of Durazzo, who had arrived with several courtiers about the close of the day, was now in the apartment assigned to him. As we have seen, he had half prepared his wife for some fatal catastrophe; he did not believe she would suspect him of participating in the dark deed about to be attempted; but even if she should eventually penetrate his secret, he knew her nature too well to fear either the alienation of her affection, or a betrayal of his crime.

His couch was unpressed, and he remained in the shirt of mail which he usually wore beneath his mantle. He was seated at a table on which glimmered a lamp. Before him lay a poniard, and an iron mask, while beside him was flung a monk's habit. His temples dark, and gathered

into furrows by thought, were leant on his hand. His eyes were unseen, hid by his overhanging shaggy brows, save when at times they glanced towards the door, or glared on the Heavens without, with a stern and menacing expression. His teeth were set, and, ever and anon, as he yielded to a scornful smile, their glistening whiteness shone through his writhing lips. He moved in his chair, and muttered in a scarcely audible tone :

“ Why do I tremble ? why do I hesitate upon the threshold of this deed ?—the cogitations of years ; my deeply-laid schemes ; all my anxious watchings, are centred in this moment !—do I feel compunction ? do I shrink from blood ?—no ; yet why this voice within that whispers—crime ! murder !—down Conscience ! thou shaker of other men’s resolves, I will heed thee not.—Crime ? prithee, what is that ? it exists but in the imagination of man, who hath framed laws to coerce and bind his fellows ; but I will not bow to the dicta of my feeble brethren. Churchmen paint

the pleasures of Heaven, and threaten us with the torments of Hell—but I will—I will believe their system a vain theory, and their creed a delusion.”

He paused, and passed his hand athwart his eyes. The dim lamp threw an uncertain light upon his iron armour; his dark shadow was cast against the wall; and his slightly trembling limbs, and clenched hands, betrayed the strength of those passions which were working in his evil bosom.

“Whither have my thoughts been wandering?” he continued to soliloquize: “have I been scared by vain dreams, idle fancies? do I forget my purpose? seeing, then, that I have nothing to hope beyond this world, here will I raise myself above my fellows, and grasp the object of my dearest wishes—a crown! a crown!—ay, come annihilation, or immortality! though I be doomed to the lowest regions of woe, the deed shall be done!”

He arose, and paced the room. The bell struck

to suspect that his colleagues indeed held back through fear, and he cursed them as drivelling idiots, pitiful cowards, whom, when he should be king, instead of bestowing upon them the promised rewards and honours, he would hang on gibbets ! but he could brook delay no longer—he resolved to depart alone !

Durazzo seized the dagger by his side, and gazed on it for a minute :—

“ It is but a blow,” he whispered ; “ and the wall betwixt me and the paradise of my hopes, will be cast down. I must mask my features—my monk’s stole, too—so, I am well disguised—should any cross me, I shall be taken for a peaceful brother—ha ! ha ! a peaceful brother—they will not ween that—pshaw ! it matters not—the die is cast.”

He hid the poniard beneath his vest, and was proceeding from the room, when the light sound of stealing steps was heard along the stone gallery. Durazzo’s eyes flashed with expectation, yet sudden doubts crossed his mind. Perhaps his

companions had betrayed him, and these were officers of justice coming to seize his person. He recoiled ; he grew furious at the very thought ; and, drawing his falchion, determined, if such they should prove, to sell his life dearly.

A minute elapsed—the parties, whoever they might be, reached the door ; it was slowly opened, and three individuals entered.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MEETING.

And you are come in very happy time.

Julius Cæsar.

THE persons, whose approach had created doubt and alarm in Durazzo's mind, were enveloped in black stoles, resembling the garment in which he had wrapped himself; but they soon relieved him from all apprehension. Minervino, and Charles Artus, for such they were, brought with them a third person whom they had lately gained over to their plot—it was a woman!

The old Countess Philippa, won by bribes, and supposing that, in the main, Andrea's death would promote the welfare and happiness of her

myal mistress, had consented to aid the conspirators in their nefarious design.

“ Well met—arrived at last, my faithful friends !” said Durazzo, in a low tone of voice, closing the door.—“ Let our words be few, for it behoveth us to proceed to business as speedily as possible ; *per Bacco* ! I had thought to have slain him with my own hand.”

“ My lord Duke,” whispered Minervino, who produced from beneath his monk’s habit a strong cord, or hempen rope ; “ I have brought this according to thy orders ; howbeit, if I might venture an opinion, I would say that, in spite of the good tale to be connected with this rope, a dagger were the surest means of dispatching him !”

“ What !” exclaimed Durazzo ; “ and so taint ourselves with his blood, bearing about us marks that might lead to discovery. True, if I had been compelled to have performed the deed unassisted, a poniard would have been my only resource, and I must needs have run the risk ;

but now, seeing that we are three, Andreasso shall perish by the rope !”

Artus, the Chamberlain spoke : “ Royal Duke, I hesitate to offer thee counsel, but it appeareth to me that his death by strangulation might occasion a noise—a dagger—”

“ By the Incarnate fiend !” cried Durazzo, interrupting the speaker ; “ and do ye both oppose me ?—Have I not planned and will I not perform as I list ? Marry, dare ye dictate to your future king ?—he shall die by the rope !”

Minervino, perceiving Durazzo’s choler rising to such a fearful height, hastened to pacify him.

“ We yield, noble Duke, to thy opinion : on further consideration I think thy plan is preferable to our own.”

“ We yield—we yield !” cried Artus—“ your Grace is more keen of perception than ourselves ; yet our suggestions were offered in honesty, and without confidence.”

Durazzo’s anger was appeased.

“ Prithee examine, my lord Duke,” continued

Minervino, "the running knot which we have made in this rope;—thou mayst easily guess how we intend using it."

"Excellent! beshrew me! excellent!" observed Durazzo. "Many thanks, good Minervino, for thy cleverness.—Enough on this head.—Now, Philippa, thou rememberest the part which thou art to act."

"In sooth I do, noble Duke;" replied the aged matron." The Queen at this moment is in deep slumber; and Prince Andrea, as usual after his drunken fit, is lying in the adjoining apartment. The walls are so massy, that we need entertain no fear of disturbing her. All is as it should be; but, Duke of Durazzo, I would say one word."

"Proceed, good Philippa, quickly."

"Swear again, in the presence of these *signóri*, to perform all thy promises: that my son, Evoli, shall be created High Constable of the Kingdom; my daughter united in marriage with thy rich vassal, the Count of Stella; and that I myself shall

bear the title of Marchesa, with an allowance of four thousand florins yearly."

"I swear," said the Duke.

"Amen," added Artus and Minervino.

The wretched woman raised her withered hand and intimated that she was ready to proceed on her dangerous commission of luring Prince Andrea down the eastern gallery.

"Wrap your stoles around you;" whispered Durazzo; "conceal the rope beneath your garments.—We will spring upon him, remember from behind the pillars that stand midway in the gallery.—Philippa, away!—Comrades, follow me!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

LIFE OR DEATH.

“ ——awake !

Ring the alarm bell—murder, and treason !”

Shakspeare.

THE old Countess, Philippa, stood before the slumbering Andrea with a shaded lamp in her hand. As she stated, he had not entered the Queen's apartment, but, in his intoxication, had flung himself down on a couch in the ante-chamber. All was profoundly quiet ; Andrea's Hungarian Chamberlains, and the other officers of the household, were fast asleep in their several apartments, for they also had “ quaffed deep draughts” of Rhenish, and Falernian.

The diabolical woman bent over the Prince,

and touched him lightly ; but he did not awake. She hesitated and trembled ; a shiver ran through her aged veins ; yet her emotion did not arise from the promptings of remorse or pity : her mind was callous, and her heart was withered up like her body. Her agitation proceeded from personal terror. She reflected on the danger of her undertaking, and the dreadful consequences that would attend a discovery ; but then arose the thought of the honours, the wealth which awaited her ; and a consideration of these banished fear, and goaded her on.

Again Philippa plucked Andrea by the sleeve, but the effort was unavailing. She shook him, when, reluctantly opening his eyes, and yawning, he spoke with difficulty :

“ Diavolo ! what wantest thou, Jo-an-anna ? is it morning already ?—pshaw ! get thee gone—I want thee not.”

“ It is I, my Prince ;” whispered the dame, as she allowed the lamp to shine faintly upon her haggard features—“ it is your servant, Philippa.”

"Ha! Philippa—well, what is the matter, woman?" said Andrea, rubbing his eyes, and stretching his arms.

"I am sorry that my Prince should be disturbed at this unseasonable hour; but important business demands it."

"A pest on thy important business! I would rather thou hadst brought me some iced water—what business, fool?"

"A courier has just arrived from Naples," said the lying Philippa; "with momentous dispatches from Friar Robert; he craves to see your Highness instantly, and waits in the little apartment at the bottom of the gallery."

"I wish Friar Robert," growled Andrea, "would send his couriers at more befitting hours; but if this fellow must needs be spoken with, why, call Durazzo, and let him transact the business. I'll not rise, I tell thee." Here he threw his limbs out at length, closed his eyes, and composed himself for slumber.

Philippa was much agitated; she doubted

whether she should be able to prevail upon him to quit the room. Moreover, though the Convent walls were so massive, she feared that a violent contention might disturb the Queen.

"The business is of a private nature;" whispered the hag close to his ear; "and none but my Prince Andrea must be acquainted with it."

"Ay, but surely the Queen may know it," mumbled Andrea; "go thou to her chamber and wake her."

"The Queen, I am sorry to say, is unwell, your Highness, and must not be disturbed. I would summon the courier hither, but it would be unseemly for him to approach so near the royal dormitory."

"Out on thy royal dormitory!" vociferated Andrea. "I'll not go—I'll not rise—I'll see no courier; so, thou Witch of Endor! disturb me no longer!"

Philippa, already embarrassed, was now quite at a nonplus. With the quick conception, however, peculiar to her sex, she bethought her of

a tale likely to arouse, and prevail over the contumacious Andrea. She knelt by his side, and again whispered :

“ The tidings, my Prince, which the courier brings, so he told me in confidence, relate to the traitors who instigated that attack upon your royal person at Baiæ. Father Robert has discovered them ; yes, they are even now in the house, and must be seized while slumbering in their beds.”

“ Holy Saints !” cried Andrea, starting up, and wide awake ; “ what sayst thou ?—this is important intelligence, indeed ! I thought the courier’s business might refer only to some fresh insurrection, or plague breaking out among the dirty people in Naples ; but I perceive it affects my own person nearly. Woman ! why didst thou not disclose to me as much before ?”

He arose from the couch ; his features were pale with alarm ; and all the fears which the timid Prince had experienced at Baiæ, returned upon him.

“Where is my mantle?” he cried; “throw it over me, my good Philippa. Oh! that I should have discharged my body-guard! The traitors even in this house, sayst thou? yet ere I accompany thee, I will arouse the Queen.”

“Stop, my Prince! stop!” exclaimed Philippa, arresting Andrea’s progress towards Joanna’s apartment: “did I not tell thee the Queen is unwell? Haste thee! Prince Andrea, not a moment should be lost; for the traitors, I repeat, are to be seized in their beds.”

“True, most true, good Philippa!” said the Prince with eagerness—“let us then to the courier instantly. Lead the way, and I will follow thee down the gallery.”

The mendacious, the diabolical woman proceeded with her glimmering lamp; a triumphant and malignant smile lighting up her withered and black features.—Andrea followed in great haste, rejoicing in his heart that the unknown traitors should have been at length discovered, and that a befitting punishment was to be inflicted upon them.

It was a moment of dreadful suspense!—a being, unsuspecting and blindfold, was approaching the precipice of destruction, and there was no arm to save!—A few minutes, and he, so reckless, so unprepared, would stand before the tribunal of God!

* * * * *

There was a struggle—a faint cry as of a person choking in death—the fall of a body to the ground—and all again was silent.*

* Gravina, Villani, and other Historians widely differ in relating the manner in which Andrea was lured away from his apartment to be assassinated. They all, however, assert that he was strangled, and not stabbed, and that the fatal scene took place in the gallery of the Celestine Convent.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ALARM.

" See ! where she comes, her mild eyes in the night,
Like diamonds treasuring sunbeams, shedding light.
Yet must I quench in death their lovely ray,
Nor shall her beauty charm my steel away."

THEY bent over their victim, those dark and merciless traitors. A feeble moon-ray shining through a narrow window of the lofty gallery, fell on the wan features of the dead, like the glance of a pitying angel mourning for the cruel destiny of a child of clay. Now that their long-meditated act was accomplished ; now that in hell the fiends laughed, as, in characters of blood, they traced the murderers' names on their eternal fiery tablets, a strange tremor seized those men of crime. The rustling of a leaf, it is said, will affright a guilty man ; and they, whose hearts before

seemed of iron, quaked as they stood by each other, and were unable to withdraw their eyes, fixed, fascinated, spell-bound, from the calm white brow of the unhappy Andrea.

"Why tarry we here?—the deed is done!" at length whispered Durazzo; and the low hoarse murmur of his own voice seemed to glide along the walls of the damp stone gallery, and return to him again, as if some demon caught up the words in hideous mockery.

"The deed is done!" Yes, and in this world, there is no more hope, no more peace, no more happiness, Durazzo, for thee!—what now will avail the endearments of wife or child?—thou dost not hate them; nay, thou fondly lovest the first; yet will Maria's innocent eyes, her soul of purity, and her heart of affection, be henceforth as a torture, as a light from paradise upon thy mental hell, and an upbraiding curse for ever!

"Why tarry we here?" repeated Durazzo; but his colleagues returned no answer, their starting bloodshot eyes being still fixed upon one object.

"Men! what behold ye? and of what are ye dreaming?"

"I am thinking, my lord Duke," whispered at last the Chamberlain Artus; "that yonder body will, ere long, be a terrible witness against us. Let us save ourselves, by flying immediately from these tell-tale and horrible walls."

"Fool! by such a step, shall we not plainly, directly, confess our guilt to the world!—fly? if thou dost again hint such a thing,—" the speaker menacingly placed his hand on his sword,—"beware! Signor Artus, beware!"

"Nay, Duke, restrain thy choler; if we quit the kingdom, of course Minervino and myself must renounce all our golden hopes of wealth and honours, and thou wilt lose a crown: but the love of life is strong within my breast."

"Craven! this to me?" and Durazzo's eyes, in the darkness, seemed literally to send forth sparks of fire.

"Dastardly Artus!" exclaimed Count Minervino.

“ Hold! if ye both are against me—if ye both will maintain your ground, then will I brave every danger, and perish ere I betray our cause.”

“ Artus! thou speakest now like thyself—but hush! my friends, that—that body must not remain here, or a discovery might take place prematurely. We will bear it to yonder aperture, and lower it, by means of the rope, into the garden beneath.”

Minervino and Artus proceeded to act upon the Duke's suggestion, but while they were raising the lifeless Andrea in their arms, a soft tread, and a whisper, were heard at the extremity of the gallery.

The conspirators started, paused in their task, and eagerly listened, stooping their heads low in order to catch the feeble sounds, which raised more alarm in their guilty breasts, than they would have felt, had a trumpet's echoes swelled through the building.

“ Hush! we are betrayed—by Heaven! we

shall have to defend our lives yet!" and Minervino half drew his sword, while the cheek of Artus was again blanched with terror, and even fearful misgivings were entertained by the resolute Durazzo.

We should have stated that the Countess Philippa, having performed her part in the foul transaction, and considering her presence no longer necessary, had retired to her sleeping apartment which joined that of the Queen. Joanna had just awoke, and, contrary to her custom, had summoned Philippa to her chamber. It was in fact to make inquiries respecting Prince Andrea; and when the Countess informed her that, to the best of her belief, he still remained in a state of intoxication in the ante-room, she had even arisen, and, hastily arraying herself, expressed her determination to see him. It was at this point of time, that the voices of the Queen and Philippa had reached the conspirators in the stone gallery.

"I scarcely know wherefore, good Countess,

but I am sad, and heavy at heart. This predilection for the wine-cup will yet bring upon Andrea some dire misfortune ; but he is still my husband, and Oh ! if prayers and tears will ever reclaim him, it is my duty to exert all my influence."

"It is the Queen!" whispered Minervino.

"Death and fury!" muttered the Duke of Durazzo, his hand clenched, and his shaggy brows knit together.

"He has quitted the ante-chamber, I perceive, your Highness;" the treacherous Philippa was heard to say : "but I humbly submit that my Queen had better return to her bed, for she will injure her health in this chill night-air."

"No, Philippa, he rather doth injure his body and his soul ; I will seek him—whither can my poor husband have gone?"

"She is coming this way! perdition on her!" growled Durazzo, and he instantly unsheathed his dagger. "Friends!" he plucked Minervino and Artus by the garments, and looked, in the

dim light, alternately from the one to the other—

“ Friends ! be firm—we have but one choice.”

“ And what is that ?”

“ Self-preservation authorizes the act—the Queen must die !”

“ Ay, we will send her after her husband !” gasped Minervino, but the forced smile on his lip was belied by the shiver which passed over his frame.

“ I will stab her myself rather than run the risk of a discovery :” added the cowardly Artus.

“ Then let us conceal ourselves instantly !” muttered Durazzo under his breath.

The three retired behind the massy pillars which supported the roof of the building ; and there, their wild eyes flashing, and their daggers lifted, expectancy hushing their very breath, they waited the approach of the fair unconscious being whose slaughtered husband, at that moment, lay across her path. Her life depended on the cast of a die—her fate was in her own hands, and yet she knew it not. Joanna advanced

a few paces, and, at every step she took, her enemies bent their bodies forwards, and more firmly strained their weapons.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GALLERY.

Cas. Why he that cuts off twenty years of life,
Cuts off so many years of fearing death.

Bru. Grant that, then is death a benefit.

Julius Caesar.

"Duke, shall I rush on her now?" whispered the Chamberlain in Durazzo's ear. "I feel I am equal to the deed; ay, I long to have vengeance on that woman, for I detest her even more than I loathed her miserable husband."

"Stay! I see her shadow on the wall; she has not yet passed around the first pillar.—When I say 'send her to Heaven!' then forward! and I will support thee, and follow up thy stroke."

The Queen continued slowly to approach, and the confederates could now perceive the waving of her white robe, as the moonlight faintly streamed upon her from the high lattices above. But again the subtle Countess spoke :

“ By the respect I owe your Highness ! by my regard for your honour and dignity, I beseech you not to walk at this hour of the night, through the dark and solitary gallery.”

“ Whom have I to fear in a convent of peaceful brothers, good Philippa ?”

“ No one to fear, my Queen ; but should the monks proceeding to early matins pass near you ; or should any nobleman unexpectedly leave his chamber, tales might be forged respecting your appearance—ah ! my zeal for the dignity, and unspotted name of my young Queen, hath led me haply to utter words that may awaken her displeasure.”

“ Nay, worthy Countess, I am never offended with thee for expressing thy sentiments frankly : since my poor father’s death, thou hast been my

best counsellor ; and I feel that thou art right on the present occasion ; as a queen, and a woman, I must not incur the risk of being seen alone in these solitary galleries : therefore hasten thou, I beseech thee, and ascertain whether your lord the Prince be returned to the banquet-table, and entreat him, in my name, to retire to rest."

The Countess seized a small lamp, and hurried along the corridor ; an angle of the building screened the spot where the conspirators stood from the sight of Joanna, and as Philippa passed them, she waved her hand in intimation that they had nothing now to fear.

Joanna moved to and fro, and at times stood motionless as a statue ; her hands were folded, and her drooping brow had the marble's paleness, and its coldness too : and there, in the shadowy light, she looked like one of those white-robed vestals whom the old sculptors loved to chisel in the breathing stone, watching through the long and silent night the " eternal and sacred fire."

In a few minutes, the wretched Philippa retraced her steps down the gallery, and stood by the Queen's side.

"Prince Andrea, your Highness, is in the Abbot's private refectory drinking wine alone; for his Hungarian friends have all retired to their beds. He will not attend to thy request, but only laughs at, and mocks thee."

"And this is the return I have for my anxiety and sorrow—this is the husband whom I am bound to love, obey, and cherish!—Philippa, my heart is sick; yet do I feel commiseration and anguish rather than resentment. O Andrea! would I could still my heart's throbbings on thy account! thou dost miss the road to happiness thyself, and my own thou hast wrecked for ever."

And, bursting into tears, Joanna returned to her sleeping apartment. The depraved Philippa closed her door, and wishing her royal mistress "peaceful repose, and brighter dreams," the place once more was lapped in profound stillness.

Noiselessly, stealthily, the conspirators quitted their hiding place; and a few minutes found them in the retired apartment which Durazzo had previously occupied. The lamp still burned there, and the three mechanically seated themselves at the table. No word was exchanged; they seemed to be gazing intently on that dull burning emblem of mortality: the light of *one* soul they had just extinguished; and the day will arrive when the lamp of their own lives must also expire:—what was beyond for them? the undying worm, the unending torture, and all that thought shrinks to dwell on. And there they sat, those silent three; the dread, the apprehension, the stupor, that succeed to recently committed crime, pressed heavily upon their spirits, and spoke in their blanched cheeks, their quivering lips, and the dew on their pale foreheads.

Hark! what soft sounds break upon the stillness! it is the early matin hymn of the devout fathers assembling in the distant Chapel of the

Convent: it died away, and swelled again, the spirit of devotion and of prayer. Oh! how those gentle sounds struck upon the hearts of those guilty men! they experienced what Dives might have felt in Hell, when he listened to the seraphic music which, for a minute, was permitted to steal on his ear from the opened gates of Heaven.

Durazzo, whose haughty eye, and menacing brow, were evidences that he possessed a hardihood beyond that of his companions, was the first to speak. His words that grated harshly on the ears of the listeners, conveyed advice; and when he had finished, the conspirators arose, and Durazzo, with an earnest gesture, seized each by the hand:

“Ere we part, let us again pledge our vow of faith:” and the oath which appealed to powers below rather than those above; which entailed a terrible doom on him who should prove faithless; which was sworn over the cup of blood that had first cemented their union—the oath was repeated

by each, and then the black triumvirs, the troublers of the kingdom of Naples, silently separated.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ACCUSATION.

If we weigh the suffrages instead of counting them, it would be easy to demonstrate the innocence of Joanna.

De Sade.

MORNING arose fresh and jocund: the ruddy beam bathed the olived hill-top, and danced on the meandering river. The light gossamer floated on the cool air. The lark sprang from his couch of moss, and mounted to hymn his matins in the sky, more constant in his devotions than man. The loosened flocks bounded over the green pastures of the Terra di Lavoro; and far away, scaling the mountain's side that overhung the foaming torrent, the muleteer began his shrill and plaintive song.

Nature was calm and cheerful; but a far different scene was exhibited within the walls of the Celestine Convent. There alarm, confusion, and terror reigned. Figures were seen hurrying to and fro; some pale with affright; others flushed with rage; while the cry of females and menials mingled with the anathemas of monks.

The body of the unfortunate Andrea, which had been lowered by the conspirators from the balcony above, remained until dawn of day unobserved in the Celestine garden. A female who had been Andrea's nurse, Chroniclers say, was the first individual who discovered the murdered Prince. Injudiciously the dreadful occurrence was immediately made known to Joanna, and such was the fearful effect produced by the intelligence, that, for some hours she remained in a state bordering on delirium.

The chief personages that had accompanied the Prince and Queen to Aversa, were now assembled in the great hall of the Convent. They consulted together; they argued long and

loud, respecting the dreadful catastrophe of the night. Grave heads were shaken, and suspicious glances were exchanged. Durazzo, especially, seemed ardent to investigate the matter, and was heard above all the rest, exclaiming:

"Yes, my fellow nobles and friends! it is a deed for atrocity almost unparalleled; I can scarcely imagine how human nature could have achieved such. But of a surety we shall be able to discover the foul perpetrators."

"It is to be hoped so—soon, very soon:" said the High Constable.

"The affair is most mysterious;" observed the traitorous Minervino. "It would appear, however, that the unhappy Prince was strangled, for the rope which I hold in my hand, was found even around his neck in the garden."

"Dost thou say so?" exclaimed the colleague of Durazzo, Charles Artus. "Alas! for the kings of the earth! let not the lowly envy their crowns!—For me, I am so overcome by grief for the fate of the youthful Andrea, that I can-

not at present tax my mind with even imagining who may be the murderer:"—and the villain shaded his eyes as though pity had elicited tears.

Jacobuzio di Pace, Andrea's favourite, the Count of Stella, Boccaccio, and others, were consulting apart; among other statements it was said, that the Countess Philippa was the last who had seen Andrea alive; but the circumstance having been explained, no importance was attached to it, nor indeed did it warrant any ground for suspicion against that individual. The general conversation was waxing louder and more confused, when Durazzo again exclaimed in a deep voice that sounded through the hall:

"Have any person, or persons, been known to quit the Convent walls since midnight?"

An officer of the household observed that the *portinajo* of the gate would be the most proper party to answer that question. The man was accordingly summoned. He stated that no one had

passed from the monastery since the hour named, with the exception of two Benedictine monks.

"Ha!" cried Durazzo, with a start of suspicion; "what was their business?"

"This must indeed be looked into!" added Minervino.

A priest stated that the Benedictines were pilgrims from Rome, who had brought a present of relics to the Celestine Convent; but their vows had forbidden them to tarry beyond a few hours.

Durazzo had been previously acquainted with the arrival and departure of these pilgrims, and had resolved to turn the incident, slight as it might appear, to his advantage.

"From Rome?" cried the Duke; "the pilgrims from Rome? the Saints forbid!"

"And why not from Rome, my lord Duke?" asked the poet Boccaccio.

"The Saints forbid! I say;" muttered Durazzo, his eyebrows knitting, and his fingers quickly beating his forehead.

"Thou seem'st to entertain some horrible suspicion, Duke;" said the High Constable.

Durazzo answered not, but presently cried in a voice of thunder :

"The rope ! let me see the rope !"

The cord, which had been found around the neck of the unfortunate Andrea, was accordingly presented to him, and he had no sooner beheld it, than he exclaimed :—

"Heaven have mercy upon the murderer's soul !—It is as I suspected ; this rope, my friends, once girt the loins of a Benedictine Monk."

And Durazzo spoke the truth ; they found the rope to be of the same peculiar formation and length as that commonly worn by the Brothers of St. Benedict. To account for the circumstance, the reader must be informed that Minervino, on the preceding evening, had purloined the rope in question from one of the pilgrims, while, fatigued by long travel, he was taking his *siesta* in the hall. The crafty noble, at the moment, conceived a rude plan, upon which Durazzo afterwards refined.

The cord was now passed from one to the other; all ominously shook their heads, and Durazzo again called upon the porter of the gate.

"Sirrah! when the Pilgrims quitted the gate at midnight, didst thou not observe that one of them lacked his rope?"

The man seemed confused, and stammered out with difficulty:—"Don't blame me, your Excellenza—I could not question holy Pilgrims; but one of them, I confess, *did* want his usual rope."

"Never tremble, honest fellow;" said the High Constable; "no blame attaches to thee, since thou hadst no orders to arrest men who, to all appearance, were peaceful brothers."

"Ay, get thee gone to thy post!" cried Durazzo, "yet one word more—which way did the Pilgrims proceed after they had passed the gate?"

"Which way? your Excellenza?" answered the corpulent lay-brother; "I looked after them, but our Lady bless ye! 'twas so dark that I could scarce see my hand. However, they called

upon their Saint to protect them on their journey back to Rome; and then they commenced singing some holy hymn; and this is all I know of the matter; I swear to it by San Gennaro, and the holy cross."

"Honoured nobles and friends!" resumed the wily Durazzo; "we will immediately dispatch pursuers, ay, blood-hounds after these Pilgrims, who, evidently, are the assassins in disguise.—Signor Di Pace, wilt thou oblige us by conducting the affair?—My heart bleeds, good friends; I cannot say what I would—my misgivings even make me shudder—"

"Nay, my lord Duke;" exclaimed the High Constable; "reveal all thy suspicions: honour and duty compel every man present to throw all the light in his power on this fearful assassination."

"That one so nearly related to myself," continued Durazzo;—"Oh! my friends, Heaven grant that my conjectures prove groundless!"

"The Roman Pilgrims," observed the rich Florentine, Nicola Acciajuoli, "cannot, in

good sooth, be related to my noble Duke of Durazzo."

"Deemest thou, Acciajuoli," cried Durazzo sternly, "that the Pilgrims were any other than mere agents, base tools?—he who wielded them—look ye, Florentine,—I must be spared—I can say no more!"

"These dark hints, Duke," observed Acciajuoli, "are worse than real accusations.—In one word candidly state whom thou dost suspect of having compassed this horrible crime."

Durazzo eyed him steadily, and proceeded in a firm deliberate tone of voice :

"We have observed for a long time past—with pain, I say, we have observed the partiality of the young Prince Louis of Taranto for our Queen Joanna. Letters, just received by me from the Cardinal Colonna, state that Louis is now in Rome."

"Hold!" exclaimed Acciajuoli,* stepping

* The friendship existing between the rich and elegant Florentine Acciajuoli, and Prince Louis, is much dwelt on in Neapolitan History. They seemed to realize the Nisus and Euryalus of the poet.

back, and drawing his sword, "I understand thee!—is this the point, then, to which all thy insinuations have been tending! darest thou accuse my companion in arms, my noble friend Prince Louis, of this most heinous crime!—by the Saints above! confront me with a champion that I may do battle for him! yet, I warrant thee he will speedily be here to maintain to the death his own innocence. Louis guilty? he who hints it doth him foul injustice—he who asserts it, lies in his teeth! I may not, being of humbler lineage offer battle to a royal Duke; but if one other Captain, Knight, or Noble, in this hall, second and espouses thy opinion, him I defy to mortal combat, here or elsewhere, on horse or foot, and thus I throw down my gage!"

The battle-pledge sounded on the marble floor and Count Minervino, at a glance from Durazzo instantly raised it, and haughtily defied Acciajuoli.

The tumult which succeeded to this circumstance, may not be described. Some entertained

a high and favourable opinion of Louis; others, envious of the young soldier's acquirements, both mental and personal, were but too ready to slander and accuse him. Few, however, in their hearts, believed him guilty; although the fact of his being enamoured of the Queen, his retirement to Rome, together with the incident of the Pilgrims who had come from that City, might well raise dark surmises in their minds.

The commotion was shortly appeased by an announcement made by the Grand Seneschal, that the Queen had partially recovered from the shock which the dreadful intelligence of the assassination had occasioned her. Eyes brightened, and the greater number present rejoiced at this information, for the chivalric feeling which the Neapolitan Nobles entertained for Joanna, at no time, suffered diminution.

The Seneschal proceeded to state that the Queen wished to communicate in her apartment with a few of the officers of the crown, and named Durazzo, the High Constable, and Francisco de Baux.

The individuals summoned, immediately quitted the Convent-Hall. They found the Queen, though evidently recovering her presence of mind, in a fearful state of agitation. She was supported by Amalia, and the Countess Philippa. Her cheek was hueless, and her eyes were swollen with weeping. Their heads uncovered, the Courtiers silently bowed before her. She endeavoured to speak, but, for several minutes, was unable to articulate. Amalia strove to animate and soothe her ; and the false Philippa wiped the tears from her eyes.

At length with an effort, such as strong mind when weighed down by calamity, only can make, she subdued the violence of her emotions, and addressed Durazzo and his colleagues.

" It hath pleased God, my faithful subjects to visit us in an awful manner. Though His ways be inscrutable ; though religion bids us submit, we may not control our natural feelings. I boast not stoicism, and therefore am plunged in the sorrow ye witness."

Joanna paused, and raised her eyes to Heaven.

“ For the love of God, my friends, and for the love which ye bear your Queen ! spare no means that may lead to the discovery of the perpetrators of this horrid deed.”

The High Constable here briefly related what had passed in the hall, with the suspicious circumstances connected with the Benedictine Monks ; but, from motives of delicacy, he refrained from making the slightest allusion to Prince Louis.

“ I am informed,” continued the Queen, weeping afresh, and covering her face with her hands, “ that ye have removed him to the Chapel of the Convent. May God receive his soul !—yet I would behold him once more ; and do ye not, my friends, dissuade me from indulging my wish ; my womanly weakness shall not overcome me. Yes, this hour we will proceed to the place of death : we will pour forth our souls in prayer to Him who hath permitted this dreadful calamity to fall upon us ; and then ye will bear me from

this unhappy spot—ye will bear me quickly to Naples."

She arose, and leant upon Durazzo, and, followed by her female companions, the agitated and weeping Queen slowly walked to the Convent Chapel.

O Power! O Royalty! can ye shield your possessors from sorrow? change and disappointment, calamity and woe, chequer, in turn, the lots of all.

END OF VOLUME I.

THE TRADUCED.

VOL. II.

THE TRADUCED.
AN
HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY N. MICHELL;

AUTHOR OF

"THE FATALIST; OR THE FORTUNES OF GODOLPHIN;" &c.

**Italia ! Oh Italia ! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past ;
On thy sweet brow is sorrow ploughed by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame.**

Childe Harold.

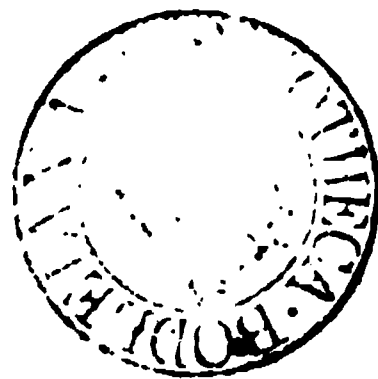
IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

T. AND W. BOONE, 29, NEW BOND STREET.

1842.



CHAPTER I.

THE ARREST.

*Barbara Pyramidum sileat miracula Memphis :
Assiduis jactet nec Babylona labor ; &c.*

Martial.

Among the many magnificent spectacles in Rome, there is no object, perhaps, more sublime than the amphitheatre of Vespasian, or, as it is generally called, the Coliseum. The solitary columns of the Forum, and the ruins on the Palatine, may excite the gazer's interest, and speak, 'trumpet-tongued,' of by-gone power, and glory. The broken and mouldering Aqueducts, that conveyed whole rivers across vallies, and over mountains, for the adornment and benefit of the Eternal City, are stupendous proofs

beyond even Egypt's Pyramids, of what human art can achieve. The Pantheon, the Temple of Minerva, intoxicate the mind with ideas of beauty. St. Peter's dazzles, while it elevates the soul. But it is in the Coliseum only that the classic beholder is lost in amaze, and totally overcome by a sight so vast, so magnificent and, at the same time, so utterly desolate.

To behold these famous ruins to advantage they should be visited by night. The lofty arcades in shadowy perspective; the stupendous arches through the rents of which the stars may tremble; walls overgrown with weeds and ivy yet still unshaken and massy, as built for eternity; the statue-strewn arena, where lions combatted, and the gladiator engaged his fellow-story rising above story, where nations, now ashes, once sat;—these are the objects which in utter silence, in dimness and decay, strike the gazer with awe, and fill his heart with a sublime melancholy, and a sense of desolation which have no words.

Two figures, passing under the arch of Titus, entered this majestic fabric. They walked slowly on, contemplating the ruins around them; but Time and the devastating hand of man, had not then rendered the mighty amphitheatre so complete a wreck as we behold it in the present day.

The more richly attired of the two individuals, although he gazed with admiration on the countless arches and columns, did not appear so entirely engrossed by the spectacle as his companion. His arms were folded, his brow was dark, and he frequently paused and stamped on the mosaic pavement, betraying emotions which evidently had not their origin in the musings of the antiquary or scholar. He leant against the shaft of a broken pillar, and muttered to himself.

“Andrea assassinated? can this report be true!—Joanna freed from that hateful alliance? down rebel nature! why should I exult, since her divorce hath been a divorce of blood?”

The thoughts of Louis, for we scarcely need say it was he, naturally reverted to the actors in the tragedy. A whisper had reached his ears that he himself was suspected to have been a participator in the dark deed. At first he treated the report lightly, and laughed in scorn at unfounded calumny; but the rumour still prevailing, and his name being publicly placarded in the streets of Rome by some unknown party, the forbearance and pride of conscious rectitude were converted into indignation and rage.

"Camillo, come hither, I wish to question thee."

But the old Roman heard not his master's call; he had sunk on his knees, and was deciphering, by the moonlight, some half-effaced characters on the mutilated base of a statue. Louis repeated his summons, which elicited the following answer:

"It is his!—this marble was erected—do your Highness require my presence!—erected to the memory of that famous gladiator, my ancestor

who successively conquered ten Gauls, strangled three tigers, but fell at length in single fight with an enormous Numidian lion."

"Camillo, I would speak with thee on affairs of importance."

"I hear your Highness, and will be at your side in a moment.—Oh! that I had lived in the days of Titus! or even Heliogabalus! to have beheld this vast solitude crowded with anxious thousands—to have heard their shouts echo along these marble arcades, where all is silence now,—I am coming, Prince of Taranto—and to have witnessed the feats of strength, and the struggles of desperation and blood—"

"Haste thee, man, and finish thy rhapsody; I am ill at ease, and feel inclined just now to contemplate the present, in preference to the past. Listen! thou art a better news-gatherer than myself. Hast thou learnt any further particulars respecting the late assassination at Aversa?"

Camillo wished to divert Louis's thoughts

from the subject, and stated that the ridiculous reports in circulation merited only contempt and laughter.

“Nay, thy jocose humour will not serve thee to acquaint me with every thing thou hast heard. Have my unknown accusers invented yet any tale calculated to win credence; for, seeing that I have been at Rome, an unqualified statement that I was a party in the foul deed, would lack the semblance of truth.”

Camillo hesitated, but at length repeated the story which he had heard an hour before in the Campo Vaccino. It was no other than the tale concocted by Durazzo and his confederates, and which has been already related.

“What! Benedictine monks!—Andrea strangled by the very rope which one of them wore and these hoary assassins said to have been employed by me?—what artful villain can have fabricated such a cunning lie?—”

“Be calm, my Prince. The best men have ever the greatest number of enemies. Shall we

climb over yonder mass of fallen pilasters, and explore the ruins on the opposite side of the arena?"

"Silence, fool! dost thou mock me?—I am in torture.—Ay, I must confront my enemies, and crush this foul conspiracy against me in its birth. I will not remain in Rome another hour, but start instantly for Naples."

"The will of Prince Louis be done! I mourn to leave the glorious city, but will accompany thee to exile, to bondage, or to death!"

Louis and his follower were passing out of the Coliseum. They had reached the northern entrance, when they were accosted by four men. The strangers were in black vestments, and soon discovered themselves to be Familiars of the Inquisition.

Louis was at a loss to conjecture what might be the nature of their business; but, in a very summary manner, they displayed a scroll of parchment, the authority on which they acted.

" Prince Louis of Taranto, and Aurelio Camillo, a proscribed Roman ?"

" We are the individuals you name : " answered the Neapolitan Prince.

" Then ye are our prisoners !—nay, draw not your swords ; ye will bring on yourselves certain death, if ye threaten the servants of our high Tribunal. Moreover, here are twenty men, armed to the teeth, to enforce our orders."

" And of what do ye accuse us ?"

" Our charge touches not the late transactions in Naples. Thou mayest be guilty or innocent ; we only take cognizance of spiritual concerns.—Know, Prince of Taranto, thou art summoned to appear before the Court of the holy Inquisition to answer a charge of wicked heresy ; the nature of the accusation thou wilt hear anon from other lips than ours."

Louis in utter surprise, suffered the soldiers that attended the familiars to disarm him.—Camillo, likewise, thought it prudent to yield himself prisoner ; and the two were silently

ected to those gloomy walls, over which
a chilling mystery, and whose name was
ated with every species of tyranny and
e.

CHAPTER II.

THE APPEAL TO ARMS.

By Heaven ! it is a splendid sight to see,
 For one who hath no friend, no brother there ;
 Their rival scarfs of mixed embroidery,
 Their various arms that glitter in the air.

Childe Harold.

THE matin-bells, in town and village, had ceased their accustomed chime ; and the sun, drinking the last dew-drops, flashed over the brow of Vesuvius. It was one of those splendid mornings clear, bright, and serene, which only may be witnessed in the beautiful clime where the scene of our narrative is laid. The Neapolitan noble had risen early from his couch of down. The fisherman of the Crater, and the vine-dresser of the Tifati mountains, had not repaired to their

wanted toil : even the humble *contadino* bent not over his plough. All ranks and ages were moving along the various roads, and thronging to one common centre ; for two illustrious men were to meet in mortal combat near the town of Caserta.

The adversary of the conspirator Minervino, it will be supposed, was Nicola Acciajuoli, the friend of the absent Louis ; but the Florentine having been thrown from his horse, had received such severe injury, that he was unable to take the field. Acciajuoli, therefore, according to the custom of the period, had liberty to fight by proxy, and his deputy was Courtenay, the English Captain.

The cause and object of this appeal to arms, which had been delayed for a considerable time, from respect to the memory of Prince Andrea, the reader will recollect.—Minervino was to do battle against the self-offered champion of Louis. The English Captain and his friends, upheld the innocence of the Prince, who was

accused by the adverse party.—So powerful was the interest, and so persuasive were the arguments of Durazzo, that, notwithstanding the favour with which Louis had been regarded, his calumniators and supporters, were nearly equal in number. The protracted absence of Louis undoubtedly injured his cause. Men whispered that if he were really innocent, he would long since have returned from Rome, and confronted his accusers. They knew not that, by the intrigues of Durazzo, he had been prevented from doing this; yes, it was through the Duke's means that Louis had been secretly seized, and confined within the walls of the Inquisition.

The Benedictine monks, the presumed assassins, said to have been employed by the Prince, had been secured and tortured by order of the Duke. They confessed nothing; but their silence and ignorance were considered obstinacy; and the wretched beings both expired in torments upon the wheel. Many other innocent persons, on a supposition of their connexion with the

assassination, were executed by Durazzo's command.

Thus stood affairs on the morning appointed for the eventful duel. The laws of the judicial combat were such, that the conquered party, even though he escaped the sword of his enemy, was to be put to death, the principals suffering the fate of the proxies. Consequently, should the English Captain be defeated, his death would involve, in a similar fate, Acciajuoli and Louis.

One reservation, however, was made on the present occasion: considering that both of the principals were of the royal blood, it was agreed that, in the event of a defeat, while the deputy or deputies suffered death, the punishment of the Duke, or Louis, should be confiscation, and perpetual banishment from the kingdom.

The space without the lists was already covered with a dense mass of spectators. The discrepancy of opinion which prevailed regarding the criminality of Louis, raised the anxiety and impatience of the people to a great height. Voices, from time to time, were heard proclaiming

for Prince Louis, or Durazzo; while some cried, though it could not be ascertained who the parties were—"The Queen is as guilty as Louis—death to the Queen and her paramour!"

Happily Joanna, who, it was expected, would honour the field by her presence, had not yet arrived. It is true, that more than once, her ear had been assailed by the insinuations of certain men who were disaffected to her government; but thus to have been publicly charged with Andrea's murder, would have overwhelmed her with horror.

The popular tumult was increasing, when the royal trumpets were heard. Winding up the valley, were seen the Queen and her Court; she was attended by the most illustrious personages in the kingdom; heralds, pursuivants, and trumpeters advanced before her. On each side were ranged the troops of the various great Barons, their gay standards emblazoned with their respective devices while in the rear, as a guard of honour, a distinction conferred on them for the eminent services which

they had recently rendered the state, came the gallant band of the English Captain.

On the arrival of the royal party, all commotion ceased; for respect as well as fear, awed the multitude into silence and order.

The Queen and her ladies of honour, alighting from their silken litters, were escorted by the High Constable, and Durazzo, to the temporary gallery erected for their accommodation. As Joanna moved forwards, the younger Cavaliers who lined the path, threw their gay mantles before her, over which she passed, bowing to them for the honour which their gallantry did her.

She was still arrayed in the weeds of mourning; her air was dejected, yet dignified and calm. Grief, instead of impairing her beauty, had given to her eye a tenderer expression, and rendered her features more touchingly lovely.

In the approaching duel, which was considered one of high importance, the Queen indeed had a difficult part to sustain. Were she to favour

the friends of Louis, it would be said that she was biassed only by attachment to him; and which statement would go far to involve her in his imagined criminality. On the other hand, if she supported Durazzo, it would be declaring to the world that she considered Louis guilty, whose innocence she had never for a moment doubted.

To suspend all judgment, and allow affairs to take their course, seemed then the only line of conduct which Joanna, in her peculiar position, could possibly adopt.

Cavaliers and ladies were seated, and the expectant crowd without the barriers murmured impatience. The heroes of the day at length made their appearance, advancing from opposite tents. Count Minervino was arrayed in a magnificent suit of Milan armour, polished to a dazzling brightness. The balteus or belt, from which depended his jewel-hilted sword, was of chain-work of gold; ostrich plumes, white mingled with purple, rose to a majestic height above

his glittering casque. His steed, a noble Arabian, pawed the ground, impatient to plunge into career.

The English Captain was far less imposing in his appearance ; but his tall figure, and martial bearing, needed not that pompous adornment exhibited by his rival. The scarf which Joanna had presented to him was drawn across his massy cuirass ; no plumes waved on his helmet ; his sword was ponderous, but its hilt flashed not with gems ; a rich surcoat, however, of crimson velvet, flowed over Courtenay's shoulders, and displayed his armorial bearing—a stag in a field of gold.

The eyes of Joanna and Amalia were rivetted upon the champions. It would be difficult to decide which of the royal ladies took the deeper interest in the proceedings ; or whose heart beat the more wildly with doubt and expectation.—The duel, according to the romantic practice of the times, would clear Louis's fame, or stigmatize him for ever ; and the lover of Amalia must

conquer in his behalf, or meet with certain death.

The champions, to prove the ground, now rode slowly around the lists. As they passed the Royal Pavilion, they bowed to the Queen and the galaxy of high-born ladies who surrounded her, with profound respect. Each then proceeded to his post, and prepared for the deadly onset.

The Esquires delivered to their masters the lances and triangular shields. The heralds proclaimed aloud the object of the present duel and the laws of single combat, calling upon each soldier to do his devoir, to spare neither steed nor man, but fight his enemy to the death. Then the trumpets sounded, and the Champions, closing their visors, and laying their long lances in the rest, dashed forwards upon their fearful career.

On, on they rushed ! some of the more timid present closed their eyes ; but others viewed their course with an intensity of interest. The

Champions' spears gleamed through the dust; their bodies bent over their war-saddles—the space between diminished, and now they met in the midst with a shock like thunder.—Where is the English Captain? where is Minervino?—their lances are shivered into atoms—their steeds, by the force of the concussion, stagger backwards, and sink upon their haunches: but neither is dismounted—neither is conquered. In a minute they wheeled around, and appeared again at their posts, while fresh spears were delivered to them by their active Esquires.

The spectators shouted applause, so nobly had the course been run: yet it was evident from a dint in Minervino's helmet, from which the lofty plumes had been struck away, and from the shattered state of his shield, that the English Captain had the advantage.

The Cavaliers, with renewed energy and double fury, addressed themselves for a second encounter. They designed aiming their spears at each other's throats, so that, in all probabi-

lity, the approaching charge would be fatal to one of them. But ere they had dashed their rowels into their steeds, and ere the trumpet had sounded, a sudden movement among the crowd attracted the attention of the royal spectators. Two strange horsemen were observed forcing their way through the shrieking multitude; some opposed their progress, but soon fell back before them. They had now gained the palisades or barriers of the lists, and at a bound, their noble steeds carried them over the obstruction.

He who seemed the principal, or master, was closely cased in black armour: his horse was the same colour, though now streaked with foam and soiled by travel.

The Esquire's helmet, like that of his lord, concealed his face; but it had a singular ornament; on its front was displayed an iron eagle with wings outspread, such as was worn by the ancient Romans; instead of the short rapier too, commonly used by an Esquire, he wielded ponderous javelin, the favourite weapon of the same people.

The horseman in the black armour had no cognizance whereby he might be distinguished. Although athletic, and above the common height, his movements were full of agility. He bounded forward on his foaming Arabian, and made a dead halt in the centre of the lists. His attendant reined up close behind him.

The heralds and marshals of the field moved from their stations to question the stranger as to this daring intrusion ; but ere they could approach the cavalier, he drew his sword and cried aloud :

“ Friends ! enemies ! be ye not amazed ; an injured, and a foully-traduced man appears before you. In the names of the Madonna, of San Gennaro, and of God ! I here forbid the procedure of this combat.—Albeit, I come not in peace, but breathing vengeance, and seeking the blood of my foes ; ay, and with this right arm, I *will* redress my wrongs, or perish !”

The Esquire, at that instant, unfurled his lord's banner, which had been rolled around the end of the staff ; it displayed lilies of gold on a field of azure, the well-known arms of the Neapolitan

Princes. The horseman, also, raised his visor and gazed around upon the astonished assembly.

Then the multitude, recognising him who was once their favourite, but whose name calumny had so blackened, sent forth deafening shouts, drowning in their applause the murmurs of any who might still remain his enemies.

"Taranto! Taranto! long live Prince Louis of Taranto!"

CHAPTER III.

THE ACCUSER AND THE ACCUSED.

Their weapons fierce, the foes are plying,
 Now downward stroke, now sidelong thrust ;
 The sparks like stars are round them flying,
 Their plumes are hid 'mid clouds of dust,
 Blood dims their late resplendent mail :
 Oh ! say which warrior shall prevail !

The Combat.

THE excitement occasioned by the unexpected appearance of Louis had somewhat subsided. The Prince clasped the gauntleted hand of the English Captain, returning him thanks for the service which he would have rendered him, by fighting in his cause : other friends he likewise greeted ; then bending before Joanna, he spoke in a respectful but firm voice :

" My liege Queen will not marvel that I have

dared to interdict this judicial combat, seeing I am arrived to do battle in my own cause. Long ago had I been in Naples, but have been here captive, by whose authority I know not, within the walls of the Inquisition, from which place I effected my escape but two days since."

"Ha! in the Inquisition?" faintly said Joann, scarcely able to support the calmness she imposed upon herself, while gazing once more upon him who had so long possessed her heart. "Surely if our friend the Pope knew of this, he would be wrath. What Ecclesiastic dared arrest thee?"

"With your Highness's permission," answered Louis, "I would waive for the present an examination into this affair. I stand charged with a heinous crime. My enemies have sought ground, during my absence, whereon to build their foul accusations; but that ground shall be proved a quicksand. Carlo Duke of Durazzo I call upon thee to stand forth! Thou, I learn art my chief accuser. As I am thy peer,

challenge thee this hour to mortal combat, on horse or foot, with lance or sword—God judge betwixt thee and me !”

“Thou beardless boy!” cried the Duke haughtily ; “think not that I have accused thee of taking the life of our late lamented king without sufficient proof. Thy smooth words, thy hypocrisy, will not avail thee. I accept thy challenge, murderer ! and God judge betwixt thee and me !”

With eyes flashing indignation, and lip quivering with passion, Durazzo turned away, and, entering a tent, hastily arrayed himself in armour.

His friends, Minervino and Charles Artus, false and black in soul as himself, rendered him assistance. They animated the arch-traitor with an assurance of conquest, proved the strength of his lance, and brought him the best steed in Naples.

On the other hand, the adherents of Louis endeavoured to dissuade him from the combat,

at least for that day : he had ridden, they said, so many miles, that he must needs be exhausted. Louis returned them thanks for their kind consideration, but would not be guided by their counsel. Not an hour longer could he exert himself without brightening his sullied fame.

" Ho ! Camillo ; " he cried ; " take in charge my faithful steed : poor Lillo ! thou art, in good sooth, too sorely jaded to bear thy master in the coming affray."

Louis, to rest his limbs for a few minutes, seated himself on the grass. The English Captain offered him some wine ; while the pedantic Roman, Camillo, bathed his hot and throbbing temples. The Prince smiled, and talked cheerfully, as if like a warrior long used to battles, seem to be little of the approaching combat.

" Our Lady save you, Camillo ! " he exclaimed ; " art thou still wandering amid the ruins of the seven-hilled city, that thou must mount the iron eaglet on thy basinet ? or dost thou fear that thou art following thy lord against some ho-

of barbarous Vandals, that thou carriest that Roman javelin in thy belt?—go to, thou art in Naples, man; assume my cognizance, and dream no more of the ancients.”

“Pardon me, Prince Louis,” said Camillo doggedly: “but suffer me this day to remain accoutred as I am. After thou hast battled with the royal Duke, I intend challenging some brother esquire—he with his sword, and I with this two-edged javelin; for as my ancestor, Julius Lucius Septimus Camillus, transfixed a barbarous chief of the Suevi, so—”

A loud flourish of trumpets from the marshalls of the field, interrupted the worthy Roman’s monomachade—it announced that Durazzo was prepared for the conflict.

Louis sprang from the greensward; Camillo in an instant laced on his lord’s helmet; the English Captain advanced, leading the noble steed which he had ridden against Minervino; and he offered it to the Prince, his own being too much exhausted to serve him. Louis thanked

him for his courtesy, and vaulting upon his lofty war-horse, proceeded towards the appointed station.

The Duke of Durazzo was no contemptible opponent; he was still in the prime of life, and had been inured to arms from his youth; he was of a huge stature; and, bony and gaunt, was capable of enduring great and protracted fatigue. Louis, although taller and more active than his adversary, was far inferior to him in weight and muscular power.

They confronted each other, it might have been at the distance of a hundred yards. The feelings of Joanna we attempt not to portray; that she believed Louis guiltless, admitted of no doubt; Durazzo, she also believed, was actuated by honest and conscientious motives, although at times, a vague suspicion that he was not what he appeared, crossed her mind.

The Champions grasped their lances; the heralds, in their glittering tabards, performed their office, and the multitude shouted the names

of Durazzo and Louis. There was a breathless pause of anxiety and impatience. Then pealed the stirring trumpets, and forward, like whirlwinds, dashed the impetuous foes.

With eyes that flashed fire through the bars of his vizor, Durazzo directed his lance against the throat of his adversary. Louis, observing his deadly intention, by a dexterous movement received the weapon's point in his shield, and snapped it in twain like glass; at the same time his own spear struck Durazzo full on the breast; but such was the temper of the steel cuirass, and the weight of the rider, that he was not borne from his horse, while the lance of Louis shivered into fragments.

In an instant the cavaliers were at their posts, and receiving fresh weapons, were ready again to dash forwards. Another flourish of trumpets, and the ground shook beneath their fiery steeds. The result of this charge was different; the well-directed spears striking each helmet, the warriors were hurled from their horses :—they both rolled

upon the plain—prostrate, but still unvanquished.

Hearts beat quick, and shouts arose; but neither Durazzo nor Louis was stunned by the fall. They sprang upon their feet, and, drawing their swords, engaged each other with redoubled fury.—Oh! how Joanna, with straining eyes and throbbing heart, watched the evolutions of the combatants! but for *one* alone arose fervent prayers; and every stroke that Durazzo aimed at the gallant Louis, seemed to pierce her own gentle bosom.

Furious, and exerting his strength to the utmost, Durazzo appeared to possess a decided advantage over his foe. Louis, although the aggrieved party, was comparatively calm; but it was a stern and resolute composure. He received the heavy and rapid strokes of the Duke upon his broad Milan war-sword. Yet, in spite of his caution and skill, his armour, in several places, was cut through, and blood flowed from more than one wound. He ga

way—what might save him? his defeat and guilt were then to be published to the world!—Durazzo's friends triumphantly shouted; the English Captain looked disconcerted; Camillo dashed his eagled casque and iron javelin to the ground; and the Queen, faint and trembling, could scarcely support herself upon the platform.

But the brave Louis suddenly awoke to the danger of his situation. For the first time he exerted his activity and full strength. Wheeling, and shifting, and practising a thousand scientific passes, he completely perplexed and harassed the flagging Durazzo.

Oh! it was a gallant and thrilling sight, to behold the young warrior fall like a loosed lion upon his foe! The heavy strokes of his broad falchion, that hacked the armour and shivered the shield of Durazzo, fell deafening on every ear: sparks flew: the cleft plumes of the Duke's helmet floated around. Backwards he bent, foaming with pain and fury. The hearts of his trai-

torous colleagues sunk within them ; yet all preserved a profound silence, and every eye was strained to behold the issue of the eventful conflict.

Durazzo suddenly started aside ; he threw down his shivered sword and battered shield, and, drawing his long dagger, rushed in to grapple with his foe. This was the most deadly species of warfare, and seldom resorted to by the soldier of the period, unless when driven to desperation.

Durazzo's arms were locked around his adversary with all the crushing strength that hate and demoniacal passion could give. The dagger gleamed in his hand, and he endeavoured to pierce his enemy through some opening or joint of his armour.

The combatants were now so involved in the rising sand, and their helmets and surcoats were so discoloured with each other's blood, that their persons could scarcely be identified. At length reeling along, as if both were exhausted, or both

mortally wounded, though still grasping and grappling with each other, they sank down with a crash upon the plain.

A thrill ran shivering through the multitude. Who was underneath in that fatal struggle? or were both alike disabled?—a faint ejaculation was heard, followed by a deep groan, as though uttered by one in the agony of death.

“ Prince Louis is dying !” cried Joanna, in a tremulous voice, to the High Constable who sat near her ; “ haste for the love of God ! and bear my kinsman from the field !”

But suddenly one of the Champions was seen to spring from the ground. Whether it was Durazzo or Louis, so soiled and blood-sprinkled was the armour of both, the spectators could not for a moment decide. They beheld the victor, however, place his iron foot upon the breast of his prostrate foe ; he then brandished his sword above him, and cried in a voice audible to all :

“ Thou art my prisoner ! it is mine to bid thee live or die !—God hath aided my cause.

Confess thyself conquered, or thou dost cease
breathe !”

Then the hills shook, and the heavens rung, and
the multitude shouted ; “ Louis is victor ! Louis
is innocent ! long live Prince Louis of Taranto

CHAPTER IV.

W O M A N ' S L O V E .

Nay, turn not from me that dear face ;
Am I not thine, thy own loved bride ?
The one, the chosen one whose place,
In life or death is by thy side !

Moore.

THE vanquished Durazzo was borne senseless from the lists. His wounds, though dangerous, were not mortal, and he was conveyed in a litter, by easy journeys, to his mansion near Aversa. There his wife, Maria, whom we have already introduced in our pages, nursed and watched over him with the tenderest solicitude. She loved him, as only a wife may love ; she saw not half his vices ; she excused his dark and tortuous intrigues of ambition : and though

at times a fearful surmise cast its shadow on her spirit, that he might be acquainted with the real murderers of Prince Andrea, she dared not, she would not for a moment imagine that he could have perpetrated the foul deed; that his hand had taken the life of her sister's husband.

Pale and emaciated, but slowly recovering from the effects of his wounds, Durazzo was now reclining on his couch. Those troubled features were still, and that wild fierce eye was sealed in sleep. Maria sat at a short distance watching her husband, whose bodily pains but rarely suffered him to slumber. Her cheek was pallid with anxiety, yet a smile dwelt on her lips, for she hoped that the balm of repose would be beneficial to the beloved sufferer.

Pity, with tearful eye, contemplating haggard Crime; Hope brightening over the evil genius of desolation and blood; an angel ministering to our first parent when banished from Paradise—such was Maria beside the sick couch of her husband.

The countenance of the sleeper changed, and its gloomy but calm expression passed away. The feeble sun-light, glancing through the stone-shafted window, revealed a corrugated brow, a working lip ; and now he muttered, in a troubled dream, words that seared the brain of the gentle listener—words that must break her peace for evermore.

She started up with raised hands, and lips apart ; she would have quitted the room, nor listened to the dreadful confession of that tell-tale dream ; but a fearful curiosity, an indescribable sense of terror, rivetted her to the spot.

“ Then he is guilty—he strangled him,—he is the murderer of Andrea !—my husband, my dear lord, a murderer ?— Oh, God ! support me—support me ! ”

The ejaculation which had involuntarily sprung to her lips, awoke Durazzo, and he stared at his wife, whose agonized attitude, and look of intense fear might well excite his astonishment.

“ What aileth the, Maria ? hath my protracted

sickness tasked thy patience too far, and rendered thee mad?"

The lady totally unable to disguise her feelings yielded to the impulse of the moment, and springing forwards, exclaimed :

" Thy dream, Durazzo—in the name of Heaven ! tell me what thou didst dream about !"

The cause of his wife's perturbation at once flashed upon the apprehension of Durazzo. He had been enacting in his sleep the tragedy at Aversa over again ; guilt had unwittingly betrayed itself, and he felt that he must have given utterance to words which no human ear should have heard.

Durazzo half supporting himself on his elbow gazed fiercely on the shuddering Maria.

" What dream dost thou speak of ?" he cried vehemently : " what didst thou hear me say ?"

" That *thou* didst strangle him,—that *thou* wast the assassin ! Oh, that I could believe thy words to be but the ravings of delirium ! for then I

would not shrink from thee in horror as I do now. Thou art guilty, Durazzo! I know at last that thou art guilty!"

Maria sank into a chair, and bent her face over her knees. Her heart was divided between love for the regicide, and horror at his deed. She dared not look on him—she dared not fly; and the agony she endured was too great to find vent in sobs and tears.

Durazzo laughed scornfully: he would no longer endeavour to deceive his wife, if, indeed, further deception were possible.

"Woman, hear me! the notions thou dost entertain of right and wrong, are as replete with folly as thy mind is feeble. I would have thee trample on such weakness, and rise superior to thy sex. Know, then, that I *did* assist in ridding this kingdom of the sot Andrea!"

"But wherefore?" asked Maria with a shudder; "I thought you intended to protect him against the designs of his enemies."

"He barred my passage and thine to the throne! now away!—declare to the world that I am a regicide! join my enemies, take me prisoner in my own house, and see thy husband endeavouring to procure for thee a crown—hanged—hanged like a dog! dost hesitate, my most virtuous wife?—go, I beseech thee!"

With a bitter laugh, the sick man reared himself on his couch, and pointed his emaciated and trembling hand at the door. Some women, imbued with lofty notions of rectitude and virtue might indeed have fled from the side of a husband stained with such a crime as Durazzo's. But Maria, though her own heart was pure as the taintless skies above her, could not so divest herself of natural affection—could not extinguish her love.

"Hush! Durazzo;" she cried, approaching him; "be calm—this excitement will injure thee—I would not, for worlds, be the means of retarding thy recovery."

"No, for it would be useless hanging a sick and feeble man—his sufferings would not be sufficiently acute."

"Durazzo, thou dost mock my anguish : I have loved thee, and thee only in the wide world ; I have sworn to be faithful to thee through good and ill—how, then, can I desert the father of my child ? how can I betray my husband ?—no, I repeat, dark as is the crime which the demon ambition hath prompted thee to commit ; though my blood run cold when I contemplate thee as the slayer of my sister's husband ; thou shalt not suffer the penalty due to God's violated laws through my means. Yet, from henceforth, thou dost stand alone—I can love thee, but I cannot take a share in thy conspiracies ; and if eventually thou dost overturn the throne on which my sister sits—"

"Hold !" muttered Durazzo in a low but eager whisper—"Thou dost touch a chord that vibrates through my brain :—overturn thy sister's throne, and place thee thereon ?—yes, that is the goal

to which I am straining—that will be the reward of all my cogitations, my dreams, my toils !”

The speaker's brow was flushed, and his eyes glistened with an unnatural brightness, as visions of power and greatness floated before him ; but his exhausted nature could not keep pace with the energy of his spirit ; his former pallor returned, and he sank back feeble as a child upon his couch.

“ Alas ! Durazzo,” continued Maria, “ I intended to have spoken words which might have chafed thy spirit, but I forbear. And now, since I know thy nature fully, that thou wilt go forward with thy darling schemes, in spite of thy poor wife's wishes and prayers, I will not attempt to thwart or oppose thy views, if thou wilt make me one solemn promise.”

“ And what, Maria, may that promise be ?”

“ That thou wilt spare my sister—that thou wilt not take Joanna's life !”

Durazzo pondered—he turned on his pillow and looked earnestly at the trembling lady : his

features relaxed from their severity, and kindness even softened in his eye: he beckoned Maria nearer, and took her hand in his.

“I have loved thee,” he said, “and love thee still; thou art the only breathing thing towards which my heart yearns in fondness.—Poor weak one! and dost thou fear that I shall shed thy sister’s blood? no, detest her as I may, overleap all barriers and impediments, as I resolve to do, I solemnly give the promise thou dost require—I will not lift my arm against thy sister’s life!”

Such influence had Durazzo over the unhappy woman, that she even thanked him, as though he had bestowed upon her an extreme favour. In place of her late dismay and horror, softened feelings rushed upon her too feminine heart, and she kissed the hand, and wept on the breast of the murderer.

“Oh! my Durazzo, would thou couldst renounce thine erring dreams! would thou couldst seek pardon for past crimes, and commit no more!—

but if thou art to lose Heaven, I love thee so entirely, so sinfully, that I feel I would forego its bliss also, and patiently endure all tortures, rather than be divided from thee !”

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET CORRESPONDENCE.

"He stood within his gloomy hall,
With sullen down-bent brow;
His shadow darkened on the wall;
His looks might well the heart appal—
What plans the traitor now?"

SOME months had elapsed. The Duke of Durazzo had arisen from his bed of sickness, and was restored to perfect health. Louis not only forgave him, but petitioned the Queen that the sentence of banishment, which, in accordance with the laws of the duel, had been pronounced upon him, might be revoked. The politic Duke, as he was bound, thanked his generous foe, declaring that he was now satisfied that his suspicions had been too hastily assumed,

Durazzo's eyes were fixed upon the floor. Thus unprincipled and ambitious man, to whom plots and rebellions seemed as natural as necessary as the air he breathed, was revolving as usual, dark schemes and projects in his restless brain. The defeat of his late machinations, fixing the crime of murder upon Louis, and implicating the Queen in his guilt, stimulated him to more covert, but not less desperate measures.

"Diavolo!" he muttered to himself; "I had imagined that this woman was so much beloved by our drivelling Neapolitans! unite the Franchi Companies! raise the country against her! this measure would now be impracticable. By the holy cross, though, the Queen shall yet fall in the snare; I will yet make her appear the adulteress, the murderess; nor while I have life, will I despair of becoming a king."

He approached a table at the upper end of the hall, at which two men in rich attire were seated; one of them was busy in deciphering the contents of a letter, which had just arrived at the fortress.

Durazzo spoke—"Wherefore the King of Hungary should have addressed me in his barbarous language, I know not; haply his Italian secretary was unworthy to be trusted with the knowledge of so weighty a matter. But, Minervino, thou art an apt Hungarian Clerk; yet, thinks, thou hast pored over the document enough; of a surety thou canst read it to me in Italian."

Count Minervino stated that he perfectly understood the letter now, and commenced as follows :—

Lewis, by God's grace King of Hungary, to the Noble Duca di Durazzo,

Saluting.

We have received in safety thy dispatches, and are grieved to understand that the Adulteress and her paramour, who, we doubt not, did cause our brother Andrea to be murdered, live unmolested and unmolested in Naples. As the gods are in Heaven, this foul thing must not

he.—Reck not, noble Duke, the disastrous issue of the late duel; it will produce no effect upon the minds of just and reasonable men. We will proclaim to the world, so that all persons may know thereof, the guilt of Joanna and Louis Taranto. Thou dost offer unto us, in the name of thyself and friends, the Crown of Naples; that we come with troops, and drive this woman and her partisans from the kingdom.—The proposal we cordially embrace. Thou dost also suggest that thyself should be considered next to us in the kingdom, governing as Viceroy while we remain in Hungary. Relying upon thy honour and good faith, we likewise agree to this."

"Ha! ha!" interrupted Durazzo with a sneer. "per Bacco! the Hungarian hath taken the bait. See ye not, Minervino and Artus, how easily we shall be able to shake off his yoke!—such is the well-known tyranny of this Traitor Alpine King, that the Neapolitan Barons will never

long submit to his sway.—But, good Count, proceed."

"To ensure the success of our arms, my lord Duke, thou must appear for a certain season, to befriend the woman Joanna. Thou canst come over to our party as soon as a favourable opportunity occurs.

"One fact we would now state, inasmuch as it is of paramount importance. Owing to recent warfare our treasury is nearly exhausted. Raise, then, for our use, which doubtless thou canst do, sixty thousand marks, and remit them to us forthwith. This money, together with a loan from our friend the King of Poland, will enable us to set our troops immediately in motion; and, by God's assistance, in a brief time from the date hereof, we will be marching on your frontiers.

"Given by our hand in Buda,—

LEWIS."

Durazzo's countenance, as Minervino concluded, brightened with satisfaction, and he claimed in undisguised delight—

“ This, then, my friends, is the answer from the Hungarian King ; San Marco ! for our cause it could not have been a more favourable one. Howeverbeit, I am staggered in one particular—where are we to raise immediately such a sum of money as that required ? ”

“ Tax thy estates in Greece ; ” said the Chamberlain Artus.

“ Seek pomegranates in frozen Thule,” replied Durazzo ; “ or hope to wring honey from Alpine rocks ; for the fertility of Greece, as well as her glory is no more.”

Send forth a strong party of men-at-arms to plunder some rich castles of the Guelph Barons, advised Minervino.

“ No, my friends,” exclaimed the Duke, “ neither project will do.—Solomon of Naples shall supply us with the sixty thousand marks.”

"What! Solomon the Jew?" cried Artus; "we are indebted to him for two loans already."

"Ay," added Count Minervino; "thou dost remember, my lord Duke, with what difficulty we obtained from him the last supply. How, then, may we hope he will advance us more money, our former debts remaining unpaid?"

"Permit me to manage the affair;" said the plotting Duke. "This crafty son of Abraham shall be outwitted yet. We will forthwith dispatch a messenger to Naples, greeting the Jew in all courtesy; and I will frame such a tale as shall bring him to my castle—the fox to the lion's den—this very day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRATAGEM.

Oh, Father Abraham, what these Christians are !

Shakspeare.

“ NOT so fast, wife ! daughter of Leah, not so fast !—Dost thou not perceive we are descending a mountain steep as that of Sinai in the Wilderness ! Rein in thy mule, Rachael, I say ; I cannot keep pace with thee. Holy Moses ! how this ass goeth thump—thump !—Boy Methuselah thou shouldst have placed a wool-bag on the saddle ; yea, I am in great pain. Would I were at my benches in Naples, quietly counting over my monies ! Praised be God, however, there standeth that heathenish cross, and yonder lieth the valley of Jehoshaphat, or whatever Gentiles

call it; and these, the peasants told me, are half-way to my Duke's castle."

Thus spoke our friend Solomon, the German Jew. The story which Durazzo's messenger had delivered, and which had the powerful effect of drawing the Israelitish merchant out of Naples, a city he so seldom quitted, was simply as follows:—

The Duke wished to communicate with Master Solomon respecting the discharge of his loans; he was still an invalid, and unable to wait on him in Naples; he therefore prayed that Solomon would honour him with a visit, bringing for companionship his worthy wife Rachael. All good cheer awaited them at the castle.

This courtesy on the part of Durazzo, soothed and gratified Solomon, inasmuch as it might scarcely have been expected from one about to pay, and not receive money. He bade the messenger "depart in peace," and inform his lord, that he would be at his residence in a few hours.

The Hebrew and his wife were accompanied only by one serving-boy, who ran on foot by the side of their beasts; for the Jews, actuated by motives of policy, ever avoided a display of wealth. Durazzo's fortress was situated about ten miles from Naples; this short distance, however, was esteemed a formidable journey by the tarry-at-home Hebrew merchant.

The road now wound through a valley, and Rachael, who enjoyed the ride, was still foraging and ambling on before her worthy lord.

"Dost thou not hear me, woman!" cried the Israelite; "thou drivest on as though thou wert the wife of that rapid charioteer, Jehu.—My beast is not so light of foot as thine. Now thou ass, will I cudgel thee with unsparing hands; why, Abraham help me! he only goeth the slower. Rachael, in mercy, halt!—good Meithuselah, run thou on, and stop thy mistress's mule. Yet no, do not leave me; my own ass peradventure, will fall, or run off; for what with the jolting, and the heat I endure from this mod-

of travel, I am powerless as Samson beneath the shears of the false Delilah."

Rachael, as in duty bound, now looked back at her disconsolate husband; but Solomon's ass, so far from running away, suddenly took it into his head to stand still. In vain Solomon kicked and bellowed; in vain the boy Methuselah laid his cudgel lustily across the animal's flanks. He pointed his nose to the wind, firmly planted his fore feet together, and defied their utmost endeavours.

Rachael returned, hoping that company might have the effect of enticing the ass forward. This measure also proved fruitless. She advised her husband to dismount; but the Jew was as obstinate as his beast.

"What, villain!" he cried, "is Balaam on thy back, that thou dost stand in this manner? Holy Israel! I am no false prophet, but an honest Jew."

Here the ass, as if to dispute his master's last assertion, gave a loud bray. Solomon, it was

evident, was now fast losing the wonted serenity of his temper ; he kicked and hallooed most stoutly, ever and anon crying to his attendant Methuselah :—

“ Smite him on the ribs, my boy ! spare not the thick cudgel ! Plagues of Egypt ! I will cure him ! ”

The ass began to move, but alas ! the motion was retrograde. Solomon's patience being now completely exhausted, he hastily took from his gaberdine, a long bodkin, which he was wont to carry about him for sundry purposes : he plunged it smartly into the animal's side ; and this indeed had a vivifying effect, but, woe unto Master Solomon ! the ass whisked his tail, suddenly stooped his head between his knees, and elevating his hind legs towards the sky, flung our friend a complete somerset over his shoulders.—Rachael shrieked—the boy Methuselah stared aghast with his mouth open. Down came Solomon, who sustained, however, no injury ; but so great was his affright, that his teeth chattered, and his grey hair stood on end.

"Abraham! Moses! have mercy on me!" he ejaculated. "O my soul! where am I? praised be Heaven! I am still alive."

His first alarm being over, he arose and approached the ass with gesticulations of fury.—
"He shall die! the accursed animal shall not live an hour longer; I swear it by the twelve Tribes! Methuselah take out thy knife; we will cut his throat even here."

Vain were Rachael's pleadings for pity in the poor creature's behalf, the Jew sternly ordered the lad to commence operations. Rachael, still interceding, hinted of the animal's worth, and at the last suggestion, the mercenary Hebrew meditated.

"True, wife Rachael, I did forget. His hide would fetch small monies, but the living ass, in the market-place at Naples, would bring me two dorins; he shall not die, no not at all—the villainous ass shall be sold to-morrow."

Solomon completed his journey on foot, and nothing befel our friends worthy of being recorded,

until they reached Durazzo's fortress among the mountains.

It was noon, when passing over the draw-bridge, and crossing the court-yard, the Jews and his wife stood in the great hall. The great and massy door having been re-closed, the Usher acquainted them, that the Duke being invalid would receive them in his private apartment: Solomon's heart bounded with joy. He firmly believed that Durazzo's sole motive in summoning them thither, was to liquidate his debts. But Rachael, with that discernment which women often possess beyond men of the subtlest parts, entertained for the first time a suspicion of evil; yet her alarm was excited too late to save them.

Durazzo and his colleagues, Minervino and Charles Artus, received Solomon and his wife with a shew of friendship. Rachael shrunk at the forbidding appearance of those dark, unprincipled caballers; but Solomon was eloquent; he drank deeply of the spiced

wines offered to him, and made himself, to use a familiar term, quite at home.

"Of a verity, noble Duke!" he cried; "it grieved us sorely to hear of your indisposition, caused, they say, by the wounds given thee by the heathen Louis of Taranto: but it went like balm of Gilead to our souls, when my good brother Ben Jacob informed us that your Grace would soon be hale and strong again."

Durazzo observed a stern gravity, and Minervino and Artus exchanged meaning glances with each other.

"I do thank your Grace for hastening to discharge the large loans; for my ships being all on the wide seas, and my coffers empty, holy Abraham! I am vastly in want of monies!"

"I am in a similar predicament;" calmly observed Durazzo.

"No, no!" exclaimed Solomon laughing; "excuse me, my lord Duke hath doubtless hoarded by him, large amounts for defrayment of them said debts; so your royal Eccellenza cannot be in want of gold—ha! ha!"

" I have no amounts that I know of ; nor have I hoarded by me any money for the purpose thou dost mention ;" replied Durazzo.

" No money ? none at all ?" exclaimed Solomon with a rueful countenance, and stroking his beard. " your Grace is pleased to be facetious. Were I to jest with your servant, I'll not be offended."

" I do not jest, Solomon of Naples. It is true that, at some future period, I may take into consideration those transactions which thou dardest to call debts : but at present, I tell thee, I am in want of money, and, to supply me with another loan, I summoned thee hither."

No language may describe the look of blank dismay, the utter astonishment of the unhappy Jew. He clasped his skinny hands, and rolled his twinkling eyes from Durazzo to Minervino, from Minervino to Rachael, and back again. At length his consternation found vent in words.

" Abraham protect me ! what do I hear ! the messenger or thou, excuse me, must have uttered a falsehood foul as the lie of Gehazi."

"He bade me come to thy castle to receive monies; what else, dost thou think, would have induced me to undertake this long and wearisome journey?—I pay! I advance thee another loan? Torture me on the wheel—crucify me first!"

The Jew's eyes sparkled and flashed with rage; he stamped wildly, and began plucking hairs out of his beard.

"Be calm, master Solomon!" said Durazzo. "Ignora Rachaela, be not alarmed!—without further preamble, I make my proposal; yet first would wish you both to know that ye are in my power."

The Duke struck the table with his mace, and his men, with drawn swords in their hands, at their appearance, and kept guard at the

"I'll not advance one copper bajoco!" stormed Solomon, nothing daunted.

"My castle is strong, and around me are my faithful friends and vassals;" cried Durazzo;

" Jew and Jewess ! ye cannot escape me, and all appeal will be in vain. Solomon of Naples I here call upon thee to supply me with sixty thousand marks, to be brought to this castle at once before set of sun to-morrow."

" Sixty thousand marks ! not one paulo, 'as my father's name was Reuben !" vociferated the inflexible Jew.

" Oh ! my husband !" cried Rachael speaking for the first time ; " regard not the money when thy liberty, thy life may be in danger. Duke of Durazzo ! perfidious, unhappy man ! thus do ye Christians treat the children of our despised race ! wringing from them by the strong hand of violence and injustice, that which they have gained by days of toil and nights of watching ! but, as God liveth, a day of retribution will come ; thou wilt repent when too late. A dark destiny awaits thee, for cruelty and crime shall not always prevail !"

" Woman ! we need no honilies ;" exclaimed Durazzo, knitting his brows. " Solomon, thou hast the sum I demand in thy chests at Naples !"

Sum! I have no monies. Did I not tell before, that my ships are all on the seas? and if I would, I could not lend thee now fifty ducats. Rachael," whispered the Jew aside; "and by me and say the same thing."

"I will not believe thee!" thundered the Duke. "Thou art a blood-sucking villain, and thou shalt disgorge. Thou didst gain thy gold from the pockets of Christians, and to honest Christians it shall be returned. In depriving thee of thy wealth, we serve our country and our holy religion."

"We do! we do!" echoed Minervino and his attendants.

"Therefore, Jew," continued Durazzo, "agree to supply our wants, or prepare for thy doom!" "My doom!" muttered Solomon, turning round and gazing around, as if he feared that the soldiers at the door were about to spring upon him.

"What doom, my lord Duke?" "Thou shalt soon see:" and Durazzo making a sign to Count Minervino, the latter raised the curtain at one end of the apartment, and in a

room beyond appeared an executioner, his axe in his hand, the block, the saw-dust, and all the apparatus of death.

Rachael, at the fearful spectacle, retained more presence of mind, and evinced a far greater degree of firmness than her husband. She gazed upon the scene and Durazzo, with a changeless steady eye, while indignation swelled her bosom at this villainous outrage, this unparalleled cruelty. Solomon, horrified, thunderstruck, raised his hands; the muscles of his face quivered, his knees knocked each other, and he leant against a pillar for support.

Durazzo's deep voice was heard.—“ Let thy wife, accompanied by my friends, Count Muscivino and Signor Artus, repair this hour to Naples. Let her bring on the morrow the money I require, and Solomon the merchant shall receive his liberty. Howbeit, if ever by word or sign he or his wife betray to the world this transaction, whithersoever they may flee, the dagger shall reach their hearts.—But lo! if Solomon re-

me to deliver to his wife the keys of his treasure, or to afford her such information shall enable her to gain access to the same, on this hour he must address his prayers to heaven, for his head shall be severed from his body!"

"Amen!" exclaimed Artus and Minervino, while the executioner, lifting his ponderous axe, made a slow movement towards the block.

There was deep silence for a few minutes, when Rachael, recovering from a momentary dizziness, addressed her husband.

"If God be pleased, for wise purposes, to deliver us over to the power of the tyrant and oppressor, it is our duty to submit.—Oh, my husband! hesitate not to save thy life!"

"But how can I save my life, Rachael?"

Exclaimed Solomon gasping for breath; "Shew me

—Where have we this immense sum?

supposing it were ours, better die, I main-

tainly surrender it.—Sixty thousand marks?

to collect them, all those coffers in the

strong-room must be emptied ; all those bags in the deep well, drawn up, which for two years I have been gathering there. Alas, woe to thee Abraham ! all this money gone, what shall I do ? I shall be an outcast, a beggar, I shall starve in the streets,—alas, that ever I was born !”

“ Haste thee ! determine !” vociferated the razzo. “ The headsman stands prepared.”

“ Rachael, draw nearer ;” sighed Solomon, clasping the pillar more firmly. “ Did he name the headsman ? look too at that ghastly block. Abraham ! Moses ! support me !—Thou art a good wife, and for thee I would wish to live.—” Here tears rolled down the man’s cheeks, as Rachael tenderly embraced him.

“ Take these keys, then, dear wife ; my Manager will assist thee in drawing up the bags. Yes—Oh ! must I say it ? bring the sixty thousand marks to this castle to-morrow !”

Thus tyranny and unprincipled violence t

trampled over extortion and avarice. But while
we condemn, and pour infamy on the conduct of
Barizzo, we cannot but entertain a degree of
pity for Solomon the Jew.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DESERTER.

Certes, dost thou think I will adhere to that party which nought is to be gained? my soul requireth honour and my paunch victuals. Marry, I will desert this hour.

Dodsley's F

Nothing could exceed the consternation spread through the kingdom of Naples, at the announcement of the intentions of the Hungarian Monarch. A public proclamation was made, in which the Trans-Alpine King declared that he took up arms to avenge the death of his brother Andrea; he called upon all honourable men and lovers of justice, to join his standard, and assist him in expelling Joanna and her paramour Louis from the kingdom. He also laid claim to himself to the crown of Naples, in right,

ged, of his grandfather, Charles Martel ; but every one perceived that this title, unsanctioned by hereditary law, and indefensible in every point, was insisted upon, merely to give some colour of justice to his rapacity and ambition.

The proclamation had an immediate and ruinous effect. It divided the kingdom into two parties. Those who believed Joanna guilty, or wished to profit by a state of revolution and anarchy, eagerly embraced the cause of the Hungarian king.

Loyal spirits, however, were not wanting ; many and powerful were the Barons who supported Joanna's throne, swearing to maintain it there, in spite of the aspersions and threats of her numerous enemies.

The English Captain, Walter Courtenay, whose military reputation had now spread through Italy, was offered large sums if he would join the Hungarian faction. But his chivalric spirit scorned the aggressor and his bribes ; he then claimed his sword ; Joanna's innocence

he had never questioned; and at the head of his island veterans, he was ready to fight or perish in her cause.

Dark was the aspect of affairs. The whole kingdom was in commotion; traitors daring openly to avow their sentiments, and the loyal party, whose ultimate fate none might divine, awaiting, in dreadful anxiety, the arrival of the fierce invader.

* * * * *

Evening had spread her veil over Naples and its lovely bay. Pacing along the southern battlement of the Castel-Nuovo, was seen a father of the order of Cordeliers. His person was short, but his rubicund countenance spoke not of abstinence, however it might express meekness or sanctity; while a full yard and half of rope was employed in encircling his capacious paunch. His hands, like those of a debauchee, were shrivelled, his legs withered, and he ap

red to walk with difficulty, although supported by a staff.

The Father gazed over the boundless shining sea; its heaving bosom was flushed with the tints of dying day; the fisherman's bark drifted silently along; and the sea-bird hovered to her nest among the white rocks of the coast:—all nature was hushed into a deep, a solemn repose. Ah! how seldom such tranquillity visits the heart of man! his day is passed in toil, perhaps vexation and disappointment; his dreams haunt his pillow by night, presenting more frequently images of sorrow than of joy. A calm suspension of the passions, an absence of all vicissitude and care, however the latter may argue, would not constitute a state of perfect happiness.

The beauty and magnificence of the surrounding prospect, possessed no charm for the friar; he could aspire not: his longings were confined to the present and sense. He turned away with an air of dissatisfaction, and gazed upon the royal

residence, along the battlements of which he had been walking; and then a malignant scowl settled upon his sinister and forbidding features.

With the character of Friar Robert, the reader is already acquainted. Since the death of Prince Andrea, he had by no means exercised so great a degree of power in the public administration, as he formerly enjoyed: still, by the character of sanctity which he supported, he retained all his former influence over the minds of the too credulous and superstitious people.

He seated himself upon a projecting corner of the battlement, loosened the rope that girt his loins for ease, and threw back the cowl from his bald head to enjoy the cool air. He muttered in a low accent, striking his staff ever and anon, as if in anger, upon the granite wall beneath him.

“ Shall I never gain this Cardinal’s hat? I will perform the mass! I will defy Pope Clement, and his myrmidons! so, let me consider:—the King of Hungary about to invade us, is inimical

is Vicar of God—Pshaw! I mean this plebeian
retic—and he would rejoice to hurl him from
his chair.* I will go over, then, to the Hunga-
rian monarch. What care I for Joanna? whe-
ther she be guilty or innocent, I loathe her with
her canting cold philosophy; moreover, her
weakness, without doubt, is the weaker: and shall I
stand amongst the trampled the oppressed?—no, by
the bones of St. Stephen! no! I will shake the
ground off my feet upon this City. I will offer my
services to the Hungarian.”

With an air of determination, he again struck
his staff upon the wall, and beckoned his faithful
privileged Servitor towards him.

Forester, who had stood at a respectful distance,
straight as an arrow, with his hands meekly
folded, advanced with a solemn countenance. It
seemed as though no smile had ever crossed, or
could possibly disturb the gravity of that long

* Lewis of Hungary was a bitter enemy of Clement VI. who
communicated him on his invasion of the Kingdom of
France. *vid. Costanzo.*

face; although his grey porcupine hair, devotional nose, and oblique vision, might go far to excite the risible nerves in a second party.

"Hath Durazzo yet returned to the castle?" demanded the Father sternly.

"No, your holiness, he is even now reviewing the Queen's troops on the sea-shore: beyond that point, your Reverence may see them. There too my valiant countryman, the English Captain, is exercising his Free Companions."

"Ah! yes," cried Robert, "I spy them,—dogs! cut-throats! all of them; with such, I tell thee, hell is crammed."

"Alas! holy Father, I hope not so," sighed Forester; "Those champions, if I may venture to say it, are too fine-built, as I think, to be scorched up in the unblest regions.—The Lord save them, your reverend self, and me too!"

"Champions, or fine-built, they are all rascals and villains," said Robert:—"Draw near, sirrah!" The Servitor's eyes dilated, and his long neck swayed forwards, indicative of attention.

"This night, pack up my trunks, my jewels, and cases of wine; for at dawn of day, I depart from Castel-Nuovo."

Forester bowed an assent to the command.

"Thou hast heard of the mighty armament which the Hungarian king is leading from the north: Forester, we must not be members of the weaker party; I have, therefore, determined to assist with my counsels the brave Trans-alpine march."

"What?" cried Forester; "and so forsake good Queen? take up arms against a woman? My Father, I dare not depart with thee for such purpose."

"S'death! what sayest thou? this from thee, ah! thou dost forget thyself!" and the Father waved his staff in a menacing manner.

"If I go—if I fight against the Queen!" protested Forester doggedly; "may the first bullet send my soul to purgatory!"

The Friar, exasperated, sprang forwards, and dealt a desperate stroke at his Servitor's head;

but the nimble Englishman eluded the blow, and the staff, striking against the battlement, shivered into fragments.

"Thou villain! thou base ingrate!" exclaimed the infuriated Robert, still bent on vengeance. "let me get at thee! thy English impudence and audacity are insupportable. My best staff too, broken! San Gennaro! I will precipitate thee from the battlement!"

Forester retreating to some distance, dropped on his knees, and begged the Friar would grant him forgiveness.

"I'll not pardon thee—I'll not hear thee—thou shalt not have of all the store I designed for thee another bajoco, let me clutch thee, for over the wall thou shalt go!"

Forester, now in bodily fear, and beginning to consider on which side his own interest preponderated, exclaimed that he would accompany the Father to the end of the world, fight against Queen Joanna, and pack up his trunks that very hour.

The wrath of the Friar, by this promise of obedience, was somewhat placated ; reflecting, on the general utility of Forester as a servant, he scowled on the delinquent no longer ; gathering up the fragments of his staff, sat himself down on a flag stone.

Forester, who was well acquainted with the monk's humour, approached with an air of the most contrition : he presumed not to speak, but cast his eyes upon the ground.

"Thou wilt go then ;" at length said Robert ; "to-morrow at day-break, order my mule to be ready ; and the fifteen men-at-arms, who are on my pay, will accompany us. I shall inform the abbot that I am departing on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Santo Paulo among the mountains ; there-fore he will entertain no suspicions of our real intentions."

"I will do all that your Reverence doth command ;" quoth Forester. "I will fill the skins, with wine, and our bags with fat capons ; the men-at-arms, our Lady assoil them ! are

hungry fellows ; and the journey to the frontier will be toilsome and long."

"Forester, after all thou art a good knave ;" said Robert, who, for a few minutes, was absorbed in deep thought, while unwonted dejection clouded his countenance.

"Alas ! worthy Forester, there is a treasure in this castle that I ardently desire to bear along with me."

"Whatever it be then ;" answered the Servitor, who, in matters which affected his master's interest and pleasure, cared little for the violation of the eighth commandment ; "whatever it be, name it, holy Father, and I will lay my hands thereon. Is it some of the Queen's plate ! her jewels ! or even her costly crown ?"

"Neither, worthy fellow : it is a living treasure—a human treasure of flesh and blood. Forester—I love !"

The Englishman was by no means astonished at this declaration ; the good man, several times before, had confessed himself a victim to the

under passion. Forester only marvelled who the new object that had captivated the Friar's heart could be.

"I must possess her;" cried Robert; "Ay, by the bones of St. Stephen! I *will* possess her!—Forester, thou wilt assist me. Thou dost know the Queen's bower maiden, that sweet angel of whom my poor Prince Andrea was so deeply enamoured;" here he drew his rope tightly around him, in order to compress his too corpulent figure to a more gallant size.—"I mean that black-eyed houri, Fiametta, good Forester.—By the holy rood! St. Anthony in the wilderness would scarcely have resisted the temptation of her charms.—How shall I bear off."

"In sooth, I know not, your Reverence; the matter would be one of danger and difficulty."

"Prate not of dangers, or difficulties to me!" replied the black and malignant amoroso. "Fiametta shall be mine, were all Naples to say so."

" Shall I give the lady a sleeping-draught ? suggested Forester ; " and carry her out of the castle during the night ? "

" Nay, I fear me she would either awake, or thou mightst administer such a heavy soporific as would occasion her death."

" Shall I forcibly bind her, and, placing her on a mule, threaten her with the dagger, if she raise an alarm ? "

" No, thou simple fool ! thy plans are as absurd as unsafe—" The Friar pondered for a short time, and then continued ; " This is the method, Forester, which we must adopt.—To-morrow morning, together with my own beast, get thou ready a female's litter. Inform Fiametta to-night, that I, Father Robert, have just received a letter from the Abbot of Santo Paolo wherein he states that Fiametta's brother, who is a monk in that convent, lies at the point of death, and prays to see his sister with all expedition. Therefore if she will accompany us to that monastery, whither we are departing on

grimage, we shall rejoice to render her our protection."

Forester rubbed his hands at the cleverness of his astute master's scheme.

"When we join the Hungarian king on the frontiers," continued Robert; "for the avoidance of unseemliness, Fiametta must pass as thy wife."

"Certainly, most certainly;" replied Forester; "I have no objections to the arrangement; the donzella shall pass for my wife always, 'an your Reverence please."

The Friar relapsed into silence; the prospect of soon possessing the black-eyed Fiametta raised his sensual breast a tumult of emotion; but now the Duke of Durazzo, and the Neapolitan nobles, having completed their inspection of the Queen's apartments, were seen entering the castle gates. Robert hastily arose, and, drawing his ample frock around him, began a solemn walk along the southern battlement; while he ordered Forester to follow him, and commence singing the Ave-maria!

Oh ! Hypocrisy ! how long will it impose upon credulous mankind ? how long will the sweetly of virtue droop in the shade of obscurity and sorrow ? while the rank sun-flower of vice flourishes and flaunts in the noonday of fortune ? The man of retiring worth seldom reaps honor in the present life ; his merits are uncanvassed, his name is unknown. But splendid and successful Crime rears for itself a tower, whence it looks abroad, and claims the adoration of the world. Thus the foaming and fearful cataract, that would dash the unwary boatman into the yawning abyss of destruction, is visited and famed ; while the beautiful stream that irrigates the lonely valley, crowning its banks with flowers, and dispensing good to all around, scarcely arrests the traveller's attention ; and though as he passes he may partake of its blessings, he talks not of it—he remembers it no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WATCH.

—whose aspects told of hell begun;
 Their joyless joy to see mankind undone.

Croly.

the foot of Vesuvius, and not far from the
 all town of Portici, three men were earnestly
 versing together. Around them were olive
 fig trees; a royal palace of the Neapolitan
 gs arose at a short distance; and as the soft
 t wind blew over the tract, luxuriant with
 is and flowers, which extended between them
 Naples, the hum of the great Capital was
 tly heard. They deemed not, as they stood
 n the accumulated lava of a thousand years,
 carpeted with undying verdure, that a se-
 chred city was below! that underneath their

feet, were the painted palaces, the marble temples, and the skeleton-peopled streets, of the interred Herculaneum. It remained for our age to penetrate and lift the shroud, and reveal to the wondering eye, the glories of the ' City of Greek.'

" I tell thee, Minervino, he is now our enemy, the man from whom we have nothing to hope, and most to fear."

" Aye, my lord Duke, I am well aware he is as deeply enamoured of the Queen as ever, and though there appears at present little or no intercourse between them, I am strongly of opinion that Joanna will eventually receive him as her consort."

" That must not be!" cried Durnazzo, dimpling with his heel the block of lava on which at that time he stood; " as we hope for success, that must not come to pass!—the woman Joanna shall have no such a husband for her supporter. We have fortunately dogged him on his solitary ramble to this place—stay, let us move to your

ump of cypresses, for, as he ascends the mountain he may espy us—I repeat we have dogged you, my friends, to this spot: the moment, then, is arrived, our enemy is in our power—S'death! do you not understand me?"

"Aye, aye," stammered Artus, "we understand you, noble Duke—but will it be safe? may it be possible in open day—?"

"Pshaw! thou dost ever raise obstacles, chamberlain, to my projects. I wish thou couldst infuse a little mettle into that dare-nothing spirit of thine."

"Dost thou mean to insinuate, my lord Duke, that I am a coward?" exclaimed Artus with lowering brows.

"Of a verity, I esteem thee not far removed from one."

The insulted man half drew his sword, and bowed defiance at his superior; but Minervino subtly endeavoured to check the rising quarrel, reading the results to which a rupture between their crime-cemented confederacy might lead.

" My lord Duke! Signor Artus! are ye madmen?—shall we suffer a random word, petty difference, to interfere in the execution of our important designs?—Artus, I beseech thee take not umbrage at the jests of the Duke—and thou, my lord, wilt do well to extend thy hand to Artus, and cry—pardon!"

" Ha! ha! I will do so with right good will—Signor, we are friends again."

But Artus was one of those selfish, sullen, and moody spirits, that never forego the recollection of an injury received; but, with poisonous and remorseless fang, cling to its memory, and live and gloat over the anticipation of future revenge. The Chamberlain, therefore, though he smiled and returned the Duke's grasp with apparent cordiality, and a shew of reconciliation, never forgot the insult of that hour.

" Louis must not stand in our way to the sovereignty of Naples;" resumed Durazzo.
" See! through those boughs ye may again perceive him: he intends to climb the mountain—"

no, he makes for those ruins on the left—ha! no habitation is there within a half a mile; and those thick embowering cypresses—”

The speaker gazed on his friends alternately, as if he expected them to propose what he himself—hardened in soul as he was—dared scarcely utter in words.

“Minervino! Artus! have ye no tongues?”

“We have weapons, my lord Duke,” replied the former, resolutely; “and methinks, in the present case, steel will stand us in better service than mouth-speech.”

“Thou dost speak justly and shrewdly, Minervino. Look ye! he has entered the ruins—never may such an opportunity again occur—follow me then, my friends, along that avenue, and I will remain here to give you, if necessary, timely aid.—Off! tarry ye not!—when it is done, return without delay to Naples, and meet me to-morrow night at my palazzo.”

Artus and Minervino, who were in a costume different from the attire which they usually wore,

expressed themselves ready to act in conformity with the Duke's wishes ; and, drawing silk masks over their faces, they hurried along the fence-trees, and speedily gained a position behind the ruins.

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CHAPTER IX.

PERIL.

Chi. What ill request did Brutus make to thee ?

Der. To kill him, Clitus.

Julius Cæsar.

Since Louis had rambled out of the City in the direction of Mount Vesuvius, merely that, disturbed by the presence of others, he might dilate on the important questions connected with the invasion of the kingdom, and the position in which Queen Joanna stood with reference to her enemies and himself.

He had just entered the dilapidated temple alluded to in the preceding chapter, and leaning against a portion of the building close by a niche occupied by the statue of some Roman Di-

vinity, he was soon lost in profound thought. The uncertain destiny of the nation, and its comparatively limited resources, insufficient probably to maintain with success a long and harassing war, offered indeed a gloomy and disheartening prospect. But personal considerations claimed also a share in his musings. His passion for Queen Joanna, although he had never dared breathe it in her ear since their last sad interview with which our narrative opened, remained extinguished. She was the bright cynosure of his soul's worship; he seemed to act, to think, to breathe only for her; yet his love was as a lamp in the Egyptian's tomb, whose light was to be veiled from the eyes of men; it was doomed, he thought, to burn within the pent-up sepulchre of his heart for ever.

Joanna, he well knew, had many and powerful enemies; and he himself had been suspected, nor was the voice of the accusing party yet silenced, — of having perpetrated the heinous crime of murder in order to obtain her in marriage.

As these latter reflections harrowed the mind of Louis, he involuntarily shook his clenched fist; and his eyes, turning from the glorious view of the ocean at his feet, glared around the recesses of the antique temple in which he stood.

Alas! did he not hear a step? or was it the breeze waving the tendrils of the wild vine which clustered around the fallen columns, and drooped over the crumbling arches? again all was still, and Louis was indulging a calmer train of reflection, when he caught the glimpse of a mantle-clad figure was crouching behind a pillar; but ere he could utter an exclamation, it was upon him! aye, swift as thought, the man, with a dagger in his hand, dashed to his side. His foreign attire, and his masked countenance, precluded the possibility of recognition. The stroke pierced the doublet of Louis, grazed his arm, and coming in contact with the granite floor, shivered to the hilt.

The bravo, perceiving his intention frustrated, and that Louis could seize, or run him through with

his sword, darted around an angle of the building. Louis followed, but Minervino, (for it was the courage of Artus, as on former occasions having failed him,) rushed through a dark passage of the building, and, emerging from the rear, plunged into a thick grove which extended along that side of the mountain, and was soon lost to his incensed pursuer.

CHAPTER X.

REJECTED SUITORS.

Oh ! blessed who drinks the joy that hymen yields,
And plucks life's roses in his quiet fields !"

Elliot's Poems.

a time of tranquillity, or when no great
unity might have menaced the people, the
tempted assassination of a Prince of Naples
ld not but have raised to a great height the
ular indignation and interest ; but amidst the
eral excitement which now prevailed, the
cumstance attracted only temporary notice ; and
the officers of justice were unsuccessful in
eir endeavours to discover the criminal, the
cent attempt upon the life of Louis was speedily
gotten.

The situation of Queen Joanna, at this period, was indeed full of embarrassment, and distress. There is no pain, perhaps, more poignant than that which an innocent person suffers, when called upon to defend an assailed reputation. Joanna was accused of a crime, of which the most creditable historians of her age agree in pronouncing her entirely innocent. Her kingdom was on the eve of being invaded by a vast army; those who should have rallied around her throne, were deserting her cause, either bribed by the Hungarian king, or overawed by his superior power. The love, too, which she entertained for Louis was a source of unceasing irritation and sorrow. She dared not give him encouragement, since a display of her affection for one accused of a father's murder, would yield a louder tongue to calumny; yet whenever, by accident, Louis met her eye, although they never conferred together, her heart would throb, her cheek burn, and her manly affection almost tempt her to quit the path which duty, as well as policy, urged her to pursue.

located in a small but gorgeous apartment of Castel-Nuovo, Queen Joanna was absorbed in reflections to which her critical situation naturally gave birth. Her cheek was pale, and her eyes were dim with weeping.

The Bishop of Cavaillon, who, by the Pope's appointment, was now at the head of the Administration, although Friar Robert and his party never acknowledged his authority, had just begun communicating with her. He had fully represented the danger which threatened the kingdom, and the great disadvantage under which it laboured, inasmuch as there was no military man of distinction, to act as supreme head, to combine and lead to the field the forces of the kingdom.—Durazzo was not sufficiently beloved by the people; Louis, to whom the post of Chief Captain had been offered, declined the honour; his brother, Prince Robert of Taranto, was in Greece.

The Bishop, therefore, in the name of the assembled council, prayed that Joanna would

give the subject her serious consideration ; as her husband, Andrea, had been dead the space of a year, that she would bestow her hand upon some Prince, who, his interests woven with hers, would never vacillate, or be the cause of the Nation : but, by instilling spirit of loyalty into the troops, and heading immediately, might save the kingdom from destruction.

Many foreign and powerful princes sought Joanna in marriage ; these the Bishop had named ; but each the Queen had unhesitatingly rejected, and begged that the ambassadors from those Courts might be dismissed. If, however, she had been convinced that the weal of Naples depended on her choice of one of the royal candidates for her hand, she would have sacrificed her feelings and personal happiness ; " but assuredly," said, " Naples and Sicily are sufficiently strong to resist the Invader, without our humbling ourselves, by seeking the doubtful advantage that might accrue from a foreign alliance."

Joanna accordingly desired the Bishop to inform the Council, that she had determined on remaining unwedded, and craved that they would forthwith elect, from their body, an individual of proven integrity and valour, to fill the important position of leader of the united forces.

The Bishop shook his head, but promised that he would execute her commands, and, in a short time, return to acquaint her on whom the responsible office had devolved.

The Queen remained alone; she was wrapped in sorrowful meditation. Why had not the Bishop proposed, as a partner of her throne, Prince Louis of Taranto? probably the Churchmen imagined that such an alliance would have the effect of strengthening the arguments of her enemies, while it could not add lustre to her own; or, "perhaps," she thought, "he is influenced by envy, or personal dislike."

Louis himself, instead of making advances, of late appeared cold and distant, and seemed desirous of avoiding her. What could this

give the subject her son
as her husband, And
the space of a year, to
hand upon some Prince
woven with her, would
the cause of the Nation
spirit of loyalty into the
immediately, might
destruction.

Many foreign and poor
Jewish in marriage; these
but such the Queen had
and begged that the

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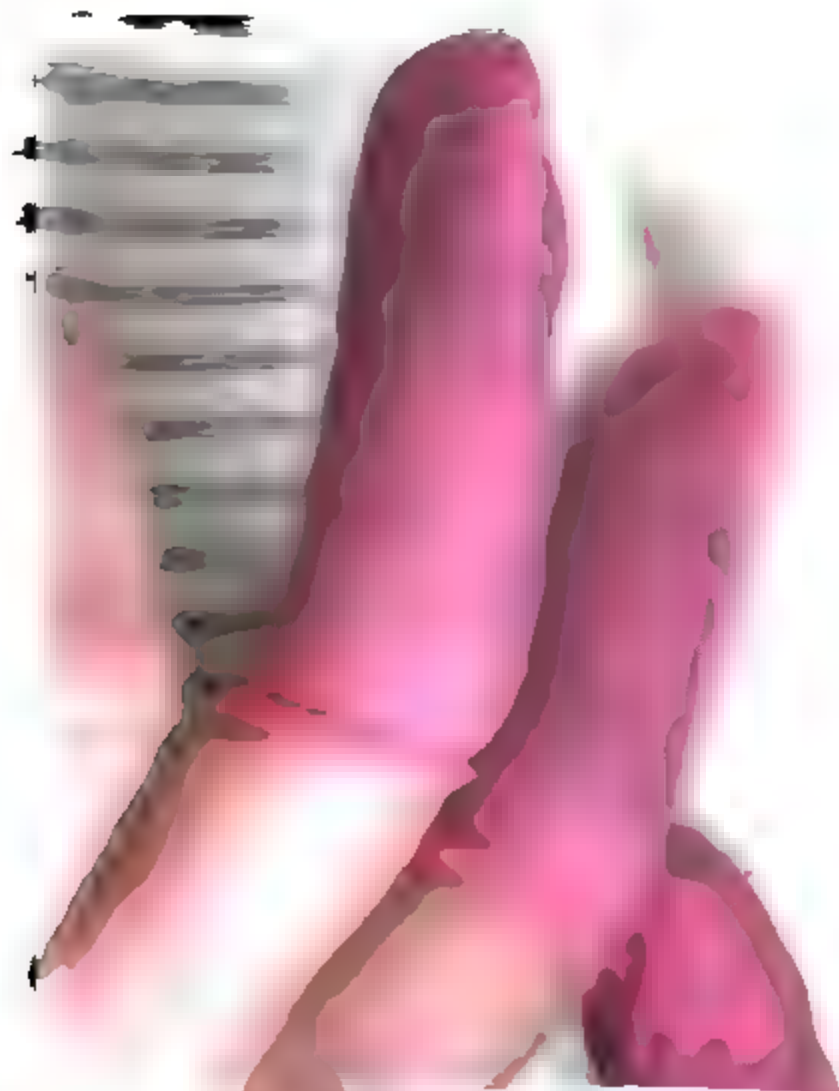
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e of his cap,
fastened by a

on one knee
to Joanna's
ies.



conduct argue? had his affection lessened, or he deterred only by delicacy, and bashful feelings, the former state of mind she dreaded; the latter, although she might consider diffidence as a token of deep affection, she almost was removed; for few women, upon the whole, are timidity or reserve in a lover. Words of passion are pleasing to their ears, though they blush and turn away; and burning glances, the pressure of the thrilling hand, are not welcome, though they chide, and murmur will never forgive.

Joanna waited the return of the Bishop of Cavaillon. She was anxious to know how the Assembly would brook to hear, that she rejected the proposals of each royal suitor.

A footstep was heard, and a page entered announcing his lord; but it was not the Bishop of Cavaillon. The soldier, for such he was, advanced; his figure was tall, and his countenance strikingly handsome, though rendered almost swarthy by Italian suns: his doublet was

ch crimson silk, and the plume of his cap, which he held in his hand, was fastened by a costly amethyst.

He uttered no word, but bent on one knee before the Queen. The blood rushed to Joanna's cheek, and left it again as pale as ashes.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OVERTURE.

— Sometime from her eyes,
I did receive fair speechless messages.

Merchant of Venice.

THE most ecstatic feelings known on earth, probably are those experienced by lovers when they meet in peril and uncertainty. Their very anxiety and fear strengthen their passion, and increase their tenderness. True, a degree of pain and gloomy foreboding may be present; but Hope will shed her soft light upon the darkness of the future, while Love whispers come what may—poverty, danger, or death—thus in each other's presence, thus soothing and supporting each other, they should be happy.

Neither Joanna nor Louis spoke for some

utes; the former was disconcerted and surprised, the meeting being entirely unexpected; the heart of the latter seemed too full to allow him unburdening aught that he wished to say. It has been said that women, in moments of embarrassment, give language to their feelings more readily than men; the observation may be just, for Joanna was the first to break silence.

"I scarcely can believe that I see Prince Louis before me. What may have occasioned his coming so hastily into my presence? for it is long since he has craved, or even seemed to desire an audience of his Queen."

Joanna felt her words as a gentle reproach for her late reserve.

"Oh! think not," he cried, "that a decrease of respect or affection caused me to shun you! I would not intrude myself upon your anxieties and sorrows, which, I believed, no effort of mine could lessen. Forgive me that I so suddenly approach you now."

"And why didst thou decline heading combined forces?" asked Joanna; "the post thou understand, was offered to thee by the Council."

"I deemed others more worthy of the honour, more capable of discharging the important duty. Moreover, I would not in this matter appear ambitious in your eyes; I would rather stand before you unhonoured as I stand without this accession of consequence—this stepping stone of place and power;—yet do I not reject every advantage, when such are my competitors—such my rivals."

"Prince Louis—I—indeed I do not understand thee!" and the Queen took into her hand a small painting, but, in her confusion, broke its slender frame.

"Forgive my precipitancy, forgive my presumption!" continued Louis; "I hear on every side that Queen Joanna, urged by the perilous state of the times, is about to choose for herself a consort. Already, perhaps, one more worthy than myself; one who would advance your interests."

rests more, but love you less, is honoured with your favour.—Oh! if you are prepared to blast my hopes, and render me wretched for ever— spare me yet one moment!”

Louis, as he knelt before the Queen, gazed upon her with imploring and impassioned eagerness. She dared not meet his glance, but bent her eyes on the ground, while a blush crimsoned her cheek and bosom; and feelings which she might not avow agitated her frame.

“Do they say I am about to choose a consort?” she faintly murmured; “then, Louis, they state what is incorrect.—Even now I have commanded the Bishop of Cavaillon to dismiss the ambassadors of the foreign princes, for their negotiations are displeasing to me.”

“The Saints be praised!” cried Louis; and he clasped his hands with flushed brow, and sparkling eyes.

“Why these gestures—these thanks?” said the Queen. “I have likewise ordered the Bishop to inform the Council that it is my will

and pleasure, ay, my firm resolve, to lead a single life."

The countenance of the lover changed, he wore an expression of disappointment—of angry feeling. There is a consolation, though perhaps it be a selfish one, in knowing that another shall possess the object on which we have vainly doted. For what is more agonizing to the unsuccessful lover, than the witnessing a rival blissed with all he can never obtain?

"Alas! Queen Joanna;" said Louis; "though my greatest fear be dispelled, the fear you had accepted of another—your words have left a sting behind them. Lead a single life! unsay these words! think how dim is happiness unshared; how cold is happiness unshared; how even woe is more easily supported when borne with another; Reason and nature exclaim against your resolution. Joanna, hear me! let my changed affection plead in my behalf.—O smile on me, and bid me be happy!"

Louis, overpowered by his feelings, and al-

unconscious of what he did, seized the Queen's hand, and pressed it to his lips. She arose in evident displeasure, and would have quitted the room, but Louis detained her.

"Now Heaven forgive me!" he cried, "that I should have offended my fair Cousin, my Queen!—Joanna, why do you look so angrily at me?"

"Let me depart!" said the Queen, disengaging her hand from his—"we will meet again at some future time."

The passionate lover still opposed her exit; Alas! how changed thou art! how cold art thou grown towards me!—Oh! by our past affection which thou rememberest no more! by my wanderings, by my sorrow, my despair! cast me not from thee!"

"Calm thyself, Louis, and permit me to retire."

Whether Joanna's love was beginning really to be alienated from Louis; or whether she acted thus from the caprice so common to her sex, it

esteem, utterly to despair. She is proud to discover the effect which the least slight on her part produces on him; but if she proceed beyond a certain limit, and awaken more bitterness than she intended, how quickly will the tide of her sympathies flow back! and she mourns that she has indulged her innocent vanity at the expense of her better feelings.

Thus was it with Joanna; her heart bled at the pain which her words had inflicted on Louis, although he had reproached her, she thought, with greater severity than she deserved. She drew near to him, and looked wistfully in his face—they were both silent; but Louis, in his stooping posture, Joanna's fair head reclined on his shoulder, warm tears drop upon his hand. What meaning was there in those tears! they confessed what words might never reveal—they declared that she felt for him—that he was still beloved.

Louis arose with eagerness; light flashed upon his countenance, and he wreathed his arm around Joanna's neck.

"And is this for me?" he cried; "art thou sleeping? dost thou, then, indeed love me?—Joanna, dear Joanna! relieve me from this anxiety! declare that thou wilt receive me! that thou wilt be mine for ever!"

The Queen was unable to speak. Louis's arm was twined more closely around her neck, and his lips were pressed upon her ivory forehead.

"Yes," he cried, "we will smile to scorn the malice of the world! we will defy the king of Hungary and his robbers—say but the word that will give to thyself a protector, and render me the happiest among living men!"

Joanna sighed and wept: she hid her face on her lover's breast; then, gently placing her hand on his, she faintly said:—

"Louis, if I am worthy of so much generosity, so much valour, then take me.—I am yours for ever!"

Loud pealed the bells that day from convent to convent; triumphal arches were erected along

the Strada di Toledo, and music sounded from many a gondola on the bay. The people shouted—"The Queen has chosen a Consort! long live Joanna, and Louis the First!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE OLD NORMAN CHAPEL.

See, who comes here?—

I know him now. Good Heavens betimes remove

The means that make us strangers.

Shakspeare.

at treachery of Friar Robert, who had deserted the cause of Joanna to join the Hungarian monarch in the north, speedily came to light. Forester, pitying the situation of the decoyed Fiametta, had given her an opportunity to escape on the road, nothing doubting that he should be able to exculpate himself to the enamoured Friar. Fiametta had returned to Castel-Nuovo, and disclosed the whole affair. Nevertheless, Robert might defy the vengeance of his injured friends ; or all their endeavours to prove the blackness

of his character, would now be considered the Hungarian party, as the offspring of spleen and malice. He was accordingly received by the Trans-Alpine king with every mark of respect, and honoured with the title of 'Man of God.'

But we shall not, in this place, expatiate further on the misdeeds of Friar Robert; a gentler personage in our narrative demands attention.

Amalia, in whom, as we have already observed, first love had effected such a change, had by means regained her characteristic energy, elasticity of spirits. Courtenay, in compliance with the injunctions of Joanna, had not intruded himself into Castel-Nuovo, nor had he conferred with the sister of Louis since their separation at Baiæ. It is true, that Amalia frequently lamented, for the apartment which she occupied in the royal residence, commanded a view of the Bay, and the shore which extends from the castle to the promontory of Posilippo. Along

ore, the Neapolitan nobles, and the English
tain among their number, were accustomed
marshal, and inspect their newly-levied troops;
l Courtenay's peculiar costume, and noble
ring, could not have been mistaken, even if
y had not been scanned by the eyes of
e.

it would have been well for Amalia, had she been
moved entirely from the vicinity of him who
d awakened in her bosom a hopeless passion.
ith nothing, save memory, to feed the lamp of
e, it would have gradually grown dim, pro-
ly expired. But now, the echo of Courtenay's
me, the glimpses which from time to time she
ght of him, served to keep alive, and even
vigate her heart's affection.

A few days from the date of the preceding
apter, Amalia, as was her practice, attended
pers in the chapel attached to Castel-Nuovo.
e service was concluded; the Priest, the
een and her retinue, had retired; yet Amalia
gered there. The solitude, and the holy tran-

quillity of the spot, accorded with the feeling of a sad but impassioned spirit. On the morrow Queen was to be wedded to Louis; yet, though she rejoiced in the welfare of her royal relative, Joanna's very happiness caused her own life to appear more hopeless and desolate.

That *she* should ever be united to the object of her affection, seemed beyond the probability of events; and that another should console her for the loss of Courtenay, or occupy the place which he held in her heart, appeared equally impossible. To her young and ardent mind the prospect presented itself but a life of fruitless pining and misery.

With downcast eye, the girl paced the length of the old Norman Chapel. A dim and melancholy light,—for the sun had just gone down in the gorgeous west,—streamed through the painted glass panes, and lit with a dying glory the images of saints, and the marble monuments of the dead. So deep was the stillness, that her soft sighs sometimes might have been heard, and even

sliding of her thin white drapery, as she glided
sly, like a mournful spirit, through the gloom.
She stopped, and, clasping her hands, seemed
forming some resolution; then despondingly
she shook her head, as if its performance were
beyond her power.

She approached a tomb where slumbered one
of her ancestors: the carved figure with its legs
crossed, the palm branch in the hand, and the
crest on the helmet, and shoulder, betokened that
the warrior it represented had fought in the Holy
Land.

She leant against the monument, and mourn-
fully gazed on the effigy of him whose dust was
underneath; and her thoughts involuntarily found
expression in murmured words.

"And is this the end of glory and ambition?
He who led armies to victory; whose name rang
through the earth; all he can claim now is this
lowly silent abode!—yet do I sigh for his re-
pose. No restless dreams, no delusive hopes,
no despair, can reach him more."

She stooped her head upon the marble, and her long hair lay dishevelled on the tomb, and her thoughts of a tenderer character sprang to her within her heart.

"Joanna! I cannot but envy thee thy happiness, for thou wilt be near him thou dost love. When thou art in pain, he will soothe thee; when thou weepest, as I do now, he will kiss thy tears away.—For me, no such a lot has been ordained; by day I must deplore *his* absence, and by night sigh on my wakeful pillow. The cloister now is my only refuge; aye, Court and City we have gazed our last, we shall meet no more in this world!"

The disconsolate girl, overpowered by the ardent feelings of a too susceptible heart, hid her face in her mantle, and silently wept.

A minute elapsed—Amalia started: did she hear a sound, or was it fancy? again a footstep, a sigh was audible: others were plunged in sorrow there as well as she; yes, for the first time, she perceived, passing from behind a ma-

ment in the northern aisle, a closely-cowled monk. Perhaps he had been praying, or mourning there, for some departed friend. But scarcely had Amalia time to consider what his object might be, ere the Father moved slowly towards her. She evinced no timidity, but hoped that the holy man, by the balm of religion, and by fixing her thoughts on heaven, would alleviate her sorrows. As he drew nearer, she recognised him by his peculiar habit; it was the confessor of the Convent of San Martino, Father Paolo, who frequently visited the castle.

But the priest suddenly stopped. He seemed struggling with unaccountable emotion. The light streamed from the painted window, and with trembling hesitation he lifted his cowl.

Amalia started backwards with a shriek, and had not the Father hurried to support her, she would have sunk upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CLANDESTINE MEETING.

Bright cynosure of my too doating soul !
 Still fixed on thee, howe'er life's billows roll ;
 And must I bid adieu to one so dear ?
 'Twere worse than death to sigh without thee here.

The Port.

It was some minutes before Walter Courtenay, by every soothing endeavour, could calm Amalia's agitation. He regretted, when too late, that he had discovered himself so suddenly. Gradually, however, the girl gained her composure; and Courtenay, placing her on the marble steps which led to the altar, seated himself by her side.

The first words that Amalia uttered were expressive of alarm for her lover's safety,

ishment at his having been able to enter Castel-Nuovo without discovery.

He hushed her fears, and briefly stated that he had prevailed upon Father Paulo, with whom he was well acquainted, to lend him his habit, though the priest was ignorant for what purpose he desired it. Thus had he passed the ward unchallenged, and found his way into the chapel.

"But why," asked Amalia, "did you come here, Courtenay? you know the strict injunctions of the Queen, and my relatives.—Ah! should my guardian, the Duke of Durazzo, espy me, he would order his officers to slay thee, even before my eyes!"

"I wear a sword beneath this vest;" said the soldier proudly; "and would brave a thousand Durazzos backed by his myrmidons, for a tithe of the happiness I now experience."

Courtenay took her hand, which she neither yielded nor yet withheld; and the girl's eyes were bent timidly on the ground, as she spoke:

"But I would thou wert not here. I thought we had parted for ever; and, in truth, since there exists no hope for thee or me, methinks I should be kinder of thee, it would spare me pain never again to communicate with me. But it becomes me not to linger with thee thus; I must depart; Courtenay, farewell!"

She withdrew her hand, and arose in haste; but the impassioned Englishman sprang before her, and exclaimed imploringly:—

"Do not leave me! hear me, hear me, Alisia!—I came hither to pour out my whole heart unto thee. If thou wilt not drive me to madness—if thou hast the slightest esteem, the slightest pity for me,—thou wilt not thus fly from me."

"Farewell! Heaven bless thee!" she cried faintly struggling, as Courtenay endeavoured to detain her.

"Reflect,—this meeting may be our last. In a few days we march against the enemy; we may fall on the battle-field, perhaps thou wilt regret

when too late, that thou didst refuse to hear my last prayer."

This appeal seemed to have an effect upon Amalia; she yielded to the Soldier's entreaties, and they again seated themselves on the steps of the altar.

"Thank thee, Amalia, for this kindness;" said Courtenay. "How may I clothe in language one half of that to which I would fain give utterance!—I have not kingdoms to offer thee, but, in the Italian wars, I have gained sufficient to live in ease and honourable independence. In my native land, there is many a smiling valley, where streams meander fringed with flowers, and woods are vocal with the song of happy birds. Our mansion should overlook these beauties; but thou canst not forsake the pleasures of courts; thou canst not resign the splendours of royalty."

"Thou dost mistake my character;" said Amalia; "the dazzling phantom of pleasure, which others pursue with such avidity; the

honours bestowed on royal birth, have few attractions for me. Happiness is crowned with a chaplet of flowers,—not a tiara of gems, prefers the lowly valley, to the majestic mountain-top, and smiles more frequently on the peasant than the king."

"Bless thee for these sentiments, Anna," said the English Soldier, "they flow from a pure, and noble heart. May I, then, dare to harbour a hope?—may I raise my eyes unto thee, and prefer my humble suit? wilt thou accept myself,—my sword,—and my lowly abode?"

"Ha! what have I said?" cried Anna, rising—"Thou dost misconstrue my words—I do not, of a surety, give thee this encouragement:"—she softened in her manner, and continued—"Impossible! the Queen, my brother, my haughty relatives: speak not of it,—urge not—but let us now part, and that for ever!"

"Proud, as thou art cruel!" exclaimed the English Soldier turning away. "Yet I have right to reproach thee; I am not blind to the

quality of rank which exists between thee and me; and it was unwarrantable presumption on my part to have expected a different answer from that which thou hast given. I depart, but although thou dost spurn me, I here vow to every saint in Heaven, to love only thee! I will dedicate my sword, my life to thy honour; and, in spite of the rejection of my suit, to my latest breath I will bless thy name!"

Amalia's heart relented, but her reason dictated firmness.

"Hear me!" she cried; "judge not so harshly of me! if I were allowed to unbosom my sentiments, perhaps thou wouldst not call me cruel; perhaps thou wouldst find that my—my regret were equal to thine. But I forget maiden decorum—what wilt thou think of me?" and with the beautiful delicacy of virtue ashamed, she hid her face and wept.

"Courtenay," she continued, "renounce me, forget me! pursue thy course of honour, and be happy! yet to prove to thee that I can make a

sacrifice,—if such, in truth, it may be called,—that I can resign the honours, the fascinations of the world; the day that sees Queen Joanna wedded to Prince Louis, I shall commence novice in our Convent of Santa Clara."

Could Walter Courtenay longer doubt?—no; and the assurance of her affection brought balm and rest to his heart, but could he consent to the determination Anna had formed?

"The Cloister! nay, thou must not think of that;—so much loveliness, so much worth, not to be shrouded within the gloom of a convent! Promise, at least, that, until the present war is terminated, thou wilt not enter the walls of Santa Clara."

"If thou dost wish it, Courtenay," said the girl after some hesitation—"I will promise."

"But wilt thou deprive me of every hope? say, if, inspired by thy love, I achieve deeds of honour in the approaching struggle, I render such service to Queen Joanna as

husband, that they shall no longer oppose my
it—tell me, wilt thou *then* be mine.”

“ Joanna and Louis, Courtenay, however they
may reward thee for thy services, with wealth and
honours, will never consent that one of the Ange-
lo race should be wedded to any save to a scion
of royalty. We must not buoy ourselves on a
hope that can never be realized.”

“ Then let time decide my destiny !” ex-
claimed the Soldier.

“ Nought now remains for us, Courtenay, but
—part.”

“ Dearest, loveliest, best ! farewell !”

At that word, Amalia's tenderness, and all
her sorrow returned.

“ Farewell ! the Madonna smile on thee !”
she cried—“ Do not think me influenced by feel-
ings of pride,—do not consider me ungenerous !
I will pray for thee,—I will pray that God may
protect—may bless thee !”

Her head drooped on Courtenay's shoulder ;
she sighed—she wept aloud in the abandonment

of her sorrow. He threw his arms around her, kissed her pale cheek, and the disconsolate tears did not chide him.

Thus Amalia and Walter Courtenay passed the

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MARCH.

Men's minds are tempered like their swords for war.

Home's Douglas.

It was martial pomp, and gay confusion in the city of Naples. It was the day appointed for the departure of the Royal Army to check the progress of the Invader; for the Hungarian march had already entered the frontiers of the kingdom, destroying towns and villages with fire and sword.

Indignation seemed to swell, and valour to inspire every Neapolitan bosom. Thousands were ranging themselves around the royal standard, which flew in the great square. Here the Baron was seen with his squires, henchmen,

and long train of retainers, winding from castle in the suburbs, and entering in power city gates. There the landless knight, followed by two or three men-at-arms, the utmost his finances could support, spurred his steed along the busy street. The hammer of the armourer was heard; plumes, scarfs, ribbons, were carried by pages in every direction. The balconies of the houses were crowded with ladies, who, waving their white kerchiefs or more snowy hands, in token of adieu to the cavaliers below, gave increased interest and beauty to the scene.

And who was the leader of this gallant train to whom the eye of each captain and haughty baron was turned?—it was Prince Louis, who was now the husband of Queen Joanna, his nuptials having been publicly celebrated

* We still call Joanna's husband, Prince Louis, although withstanding the Pope saluted him as King, in few records does he bear that title; his general appetites were as well as before his marriage with Joanna, being Louis of Taranto.

days previously. Alas ! how soon was he summoned from the altar to the battle-field ! from the sweet smiles of her he adored, to face Gorgon danger and death !

Speedily, yet without confusion, Louis marshalled the troops as they arrived from divers quarters. The Duke of Durazzo, who was next in command, seemed almost as active as himself. None present, with the exception of one individual, appeared to entertain the least suspicion regarding the Duke's loyalty. He who looked on him with an eye of mistrust, was the English Captain ; but Courtenay possessed no proof of his guilt, entertaining only a vague surmise that he held a secret correspondence with the enemy ; a public accusation, therefore, would be as rash as unjustifiable.

The English Adventurers, in consequence of late reinforcement, amounted now to two thousand men. All admitted that this body was the finest and most effective portion of the Royal army. The Italian men-at-arms were

slender and puny, compared with the tall and brawny Englishmen. The native of De with his long sword and heavy battle-axe, regarded as a match for two Neapolitans, or at the least, three Sicilians; and probably one in the whole army, excepting Louis himself, was equal to cope, single-handed, with an English Captain.

There is no spectacle which awakens so intense interest and enthusiasm, than the march of a fine army departing to combat in the defence of its country. It may be victorious, and raise the renown of a nation; or it may bring ruin upon the whole community, and doom itself never to return. That morning was an anxious time for lovers and their mistresses. Many who late, in bashfulness or pride, had repelled the advances of their admirers, found now their reserve or coldness gone away, and sobbed and vowed eternal constancy. Many felt as though they had exchanged their last look, and pronounced their last farewell.

The wife, too, hung weeping on the bosom of her lord; and the mailed warrior, though he embraced her more ardently, kissed also his berub fondling, that smiled unconsciously, and layed with his floating plume.

Such were the scenes passing in the great square of Naples, when the royal trumpet sounded. The blast was immediately answered by the bugle of each baron, and the war-cry of each knight banneret. The command was given to march northward, and to issue at the Capuan gate. Then the standards were raised; the shrill pipe and rolling drum, united their stirring music, and the host, like a mighty stream, was put into motion.

We shall not fatigue the reader with the description of a long march in the fourteenth century: armies being, at that period, composed chiefly of cavalry, traversed the country more rapidly than they do in the present day. Louis and his followers proceeded through vallies, and over mountains; castles and towns did homage

as they passed, and such as had declared enemy were speedily reduced.

The advanced guard of the Neapolitan army, on the third day, came in contact with a detached party of the enemy, composed of foragers and scouts. A fierce skirmish ensued, in which the Hungarians were worsted, and driven back to their main body. This circumstance created considerable interest on the part of the Royalists; it was considered a favourable omen; and they pressed forwards, burning to meet, as they deservedly termed them, the robbers of the country.

The Italians did not remain long in this state of feverish anxiety. A few miles north of the city of Aquila, the hostile armies came in sight of each other. The forces of the Hungarian King, whatever might have been their discipline, were greatly superior in number to those of Prince Louis; their front was drawn out to an incredible extent, and the motley half-armed troops in their rear, completely blackened the country.

The Neapolitans ascended a gentle eminence, and calmly, but full of confidence, awaited the approach of the invading multitude. File after file, and troop after troop, led by the trans-Alpine monarch in person, advanced and ranged themselves opposite to the Queen's army. Barbarous instruments of music, strange and harsh to the ear of the Italian, rent the air; and, in order to strike greater terror into his opponents, the Hungarian King had constructed a very extraordinary banner; it was a huge black flag, on which was depicted, in colours of blood, the murder of Andrea; while, in the back ground, Queen Joanna and Louis were seen urging on the assassins*.—This standard was borne by persons habited in black, who moved slowly through the ranks, chanting a mournful dirge, and denouncing vengeance on the murderers of the Monarch's brother.

At the head of this funereal *cortège*, walked

* For a further description of this banner, vide Villani, Stazzo, and others.

an individual well known to us by the name of Friar Robert; he was no longer arrayed in the simple garb of a Cordelier, but the lofty mitre and the flowing episcopal robe, declared that the holy man had attained to the dignity of Bishop; Forester, also, was present; he was mingled, clad in lugubrious weeds, among the bemoaners; his countenance was the saddest to be seen there, and he chanted more loudly than all the death-note of woe. We must do him justice, however, by stating, that when curses were showered upon Louis and Joanna, Forester was silent; and, with his sleeve, he hastily wiped a tear from his cheek, as if he pitied the fate of the defamed Queen, and mourned the necessity which he was compelled to act.

The hostile armies gazed upon each other, contemplating their mutual strength; but, as the day being nearly spent, betwixt the parties each host, proclaimed that hostilities should be suspended until the ensuing morning.

That night was one of fearful anxiety

suspense. The morrow, Louis reflected, would decide the fate of the kingdom, and the doom of Joanna and himself. He summoned the chief barons and captains to his tent; and long this council of war debated, the subject of their discussion being their own resources, and the strength and position of their foes; at length Louis spoke.—

“Fellow Soldiers! it is not that I dread the issue of the conflict; for all of you being true and loyal subjects, and fighting as we do for our earths and altars,”—(the English Captain involuntarily gazed upon Durazzo;) “we cannot but discomfit this host of aggressors and robbers; but I mourn for the friends who must fall. I would stay an unnecessary waste of life. Do you consent, therefore, that I send forthwith a defiance to the Hungarian King, challenging him to single combat, in presence of both armies; our cause to be decided by the result of the duel!”

Durazzo, whatever his motive might have

been, strongly objected to this arrangement; but the English Captain and others, declared that the challenge was perfectly in accordance with the laws of honour and of war; although they burned to draw their own swords, they would not oppose the wishes of their leader.

A herald, accordingly, was dispatched to the enemy's camp; but the insulting answer returned by the Hungarian, roused to the highest pitch the indignation of Louis and his Barons. It ran as follows :—

“ We, by God's Grace, King of Hungary, being come to unite fair Naples to our Crown, do not think it befitting our dignity to enter into any treaty with the paramour of the world's Joanna : much less are we in the habit of fighting, single-handed, with usurpers and murderers.—Beardless boy ! retire with thy rebellious troops, while yet darkness favours thy flight. If ye tarry until the morning, ye will tarry only to feast the birds of Heaven. Howbeit, tarry ye not.”

Louis of Taranto, we would fain take alive ; for it would not be seemly that thy partner in crime, the royal murderess Joanna, should grace the scaffold alone !”

“ We will attack them immediately !” cried Louis in a frenzy of rage. “ Courtenay, thou, with thy heavy horse, canst charge them in flank, and I, with our Calabrian mountaineers, will rush upon their van.”

“ Remember our agreement !” exclaimed Durazzo in a loud voice. “ No hostilities until morning ! Shall we violate our knightly promise ?”

The warriors of those chivalric times were wont to observe a promise with a degree of reverence that modern generals, in similar circumstances, might despise. Thus, the simple reference made by Durazzo, was sufficient to deter those fiery spirits from indulging their ardent desire of attacking the enemy.

“ It is true ;” said Louis, with an air of dis-

appointment; "our word is passed; but w
the first sun-beam that glances over the Abr
zo mountains, friends! comrades! we v
upon them!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE BATTLE OF AQUILA.

" Ah ! who that mingles in the glorious fight,
 Doth aye of danger think or harbour fear ?
 His spirit boundeth with a stern delight,
 And, breathing rage, he goes his red career."

WERE a calculation to be made of all who have perished on the field of battle, from the first fight upon record downwards, the aggregate sum, probably, would exceed the number of beings now peopling the world. Yet war, certain theologians have affirmed, from our physical and moral condition, is a necessary evil ; it counteracts, say they, a superfluity of population. Men increase faster than they die natural deaths. The world is like a pond of fish, where, unless some

at times be caught, the finny denizens will
commodore each other.

But while we repudiate the illiberal opinions
of such reasoners, we may ask if the day
ever arrive, when peace will extend her
branch over every country, and every clime
faith and hope fondly anticipate such a peace
yet before a millenium can take place, a
moral revolution, scarcely to be considered
possible in the natural order of things, must
be effected throughout the world. There must
be no aspirations after rank, no grasping
power; the followers of one creed must not
denigrate those of another.—Alas! such is the
constitution of man, that nothing, it is
feared, short of a miracle will produce in him
a concordance of opinion, restrain his restless
passions, and prevail upon him to fashion his
into a pruning hook, and sit contentedly beneath
his own vine, coveting not the possessions of
neighbour, and feeling no ambition to rise above
and sway over, his fellow creatures.

The devotees that accompanied the Neapolitan army, had finished their midnight prayers. With outstretched hands, they blessed Prince Louis and his followers. They promised glory to those who should conquer, and Heaven to those who might fall. A trumpet was to be sounded immediately the sun appeared above the horizon ; and this was to be the signal for commencing the battle, the gallant royalists, in spite of the disadvantages under which they laboured, having determined boldly to attack the enemy.

Louis commanded the centre, which was composed of eight thousand Calabrian and Puglian men. The left wing was led on by Durazzo, consisting of his own retainers, and a large body of Sicilian archers. On the right, with his two thousand men-at-arms, was stationed the English captain ; and this force, although so inconsiderable, was considered sufficiently strong to maintain the important post assigned them. Count Minervino and the Grand Chamberlain Artus, headed in the rear a body of reserve.

All were at their stations, and ready for onset. Through the dusk, might be seen the glare of the enemy's torches, for the Hungarians also, were preparing for the battle. The sound of their strange instruments floated on the wind, and the tramp and neigh of their horses were heard, as they shifted and wheeled into their several positions.

The darkness lessened in the east; thither the eyes of the patriots turned; and no Man from Persian shrine, ever watched with greater anxiety than they, the rising of the glorious minary. A sun-beam at length shot obliquely from the dappled mountains, and shone upon the narrow plain that extended between the advancing hosts. Then pealed the trumpet—"the Queen and liberty!" rent the air--and, laying to lances in the rest, the Royalists bore down a whirlwind upon their foes.

The Hungarians, not expecting this sudden and resolute attack from a host so much inferior to their own, were scarcely prepared to receive

hem. They gave way, they fell back in confusion. Louis, with his brave Calabrians, pressed upon their lines, trampling hundreds to death beneath their horses' feet. The English Captain, also, and his men-at-arms, with their long swords and ponderous axes, bore down all opposition, and penetrated nearly to the enemy's centre.

On the other side of the field, the combat wore a different aspect. The troops under the command of Durazzo, although they attacked the Hungarians, appeared to make no impression upon them. The ground, it would seem, was unfavourable, or their bow-strings were relaxed by a shower which had fallen during the night. Albervino, and Artus, also, instead of advancing to their assistance, remained inactive. Indeed, Durazzo's retainers were beginning to fall back, or rather to make a sidelong retreat; nor did they seem to understand any of the orders dispatched to them by Louis.

Courtenay, however, with his brave English followers, still mowed down the Hungarians.

They shrank back, and cowered before him. Like an avenging spirit, he swept the field; and though countless arrows were hurled at him, they whistled harmlessly around his head, or fell, without effect, from his panoply of steel. His horse was slain—he mounted another. His sword was broken—he wrested one from the hand of a trembling Hungarian. His war-cry of St. George! rang over the field, and in every quarter he charged, he turned the tide of battle.

Louis, in deeds of valour, was second only to the heroic Englishman; nor must his foil, the grey-headed Camillo, be overlooked. The veteran Roman fought close behind his master, athwart his saddle-bow lay a huge bundle of javelins; and such was the execution which he did with these missiles, flinging them in the manner of the ancient Romans, that none dared approach to attack him with the sword.

The great object of Louis was to penetrate the tent of the Hungarian monarch, for he had

to slay with his own hand the insulter and aggressor. His efforts were not unattended with success; for now, scarcely ten lances distant, surrounded by his guards, he beheld the Hungarian with the crown upon his head. He shouted, and dashed forwards. He called upon the King to fight; nor was the latter, this time, unheedful of the challenge. He turned, and brandishing his sword at Louis, bade him come on. Not a minute was the conflict in suspense, for what could the Hungarian despot achieve against such a soldier as Louis! with one blow of his heavy battle-axe, the Prince of Taranto hurled him from his horse, and the proud monarch of Hungary lay prostrate upon the field, covered with mire, while his glittering crown was broken into fragments.

A shout of triumph burst from the followers of Louis, and the Hungarians uttered a yell of fury. But alas! the glory of the Neapolitan leader was dearly purchased. Pursuing his career, and slaughtering all who offered opposition to his

progress, none of his soldiers, saving Camillo, were able to keep pace with him; and he found himself suddenly cut off from his Alban and Apulian horse, and with the faithful Roman remnant surrounded in by hundreds of the Hungarian gunners.

He stood in the midst of barbarous soldiers, behind and before were levelled pikes, and he was called upon him to surrender, but he returned no answer:—the lion, caught in the toils, would not stoop to disengage himself. He made a desperate resistance, seconded by the indignant Camillo; but his generous steeds were soon pierced by numerous spears, and they sank, with their gallant rider, upon the plain. In an instant Louis was bound and bound in fetters; and the Hungarians, who had recovered from the effects of their defeat, exultingly approached, and gazed with morbid satisfaction upon his captive enemy.

The rumour that Prince Louis was a prisoner soon spread over the field of battle. The Puglian and Calabrian troops, who had been faithful, and had fought with distinction,

ravery, perceiving that all was lost, betook themselves to flight. The traitor Durazzo, with his retainers, and Minervino and Charles Artus, with their corrupted body of reserve, prior to this had wheeled around, and joined the ranks of the enemy.

The English Captain and his Adventurers, however, remained unshaken; they still fought, refusing to yield, or to quit the scene of action. Nothing could exceed the anguish, mingled with rage, that goaded Courtenay's spirit, when he heard of their gallant leader's fate.

"A prisoner!" he exclaimed to his men; "Prince Louis taken prisoner!—as we hope for mercy here and mercy hereafter, this must not be.—Yonder flies the King of Hungary's standard; those insulting shouts proclaim that the prince is there. Oh! if we are Britons, if we are men! let us rush to his rescue!"

As the heart of one man, did the hearts of Courtenay's followers echo the emotions which swelled his own bosom. They were reduced to

half their original number, yet they dared oppose the whole mass of the Hungarian army. Forming themselves into the shape of a wedge, and with the apex of which, if we may so speak, Courtenay stationed himself, they moved steadily but resistibly forward. Their spears, projecting, formed a bulwark on each side, and with their axes hewed down the wild crowds of high-capped barbarians, who threw themselves across their path in an endeavour to bar their progress.

Superior in weight to their adversaries, and led on by such a soldier as the English Captain, whom so often they had followed to victory, it was not surprising that the Adventurers soon opened a passage into the very heart of the Hungarian army.

In vain the Trans-Alpine soldiers began to move off with their royal captive; in vain the despot of Hungary threatened his guards with disgrace and death, if they delivered Prince Louis into the hands of his friends. The English troopers shouted their war-cry, and pressing

wards, reached the spot where the Prince lay in fetters. Courtenay recognized his voice, for Louis called upon him, and cheered him on; and well did the English Captain answer the summons. In a few minutes, the dense crowd that encircled the Prince, disputing the possession of the captive, was cut to pieces. Courtenay sprang from his horse, and with his sword succeeded in severing the bonds of Louis; he instantly presented to him his steed, and mounted another that stood near.

The brave warriors gazed around them, but fearful was their situation; as the billows close behind the bark, ploughing the bosom of the mighty deep; so, having forced their way into that vast army, the mass had closed upon their rear, and they stood begirt by tens of thousands.

The furious Hungarian King ordered his troops to attack this handful of soldiers on every side; to yield them no quarter, to make them not prisoners, but to kill them all, even to a man.

CHAPTER XVI.

RUINED FORTUNES.

Let fortune smile, or sorrow lower,
 We'll true companions be ;
 How desolate, how cold were life,
 Friendship, bereft of thee !

Old Song.

It was night among the Apennine mountains; the moon was concealed behind rolling clouds; the rain fell in torrents; the winds whistled through the giant trees; and the deep howl of the wolf were heard amid the pauses of the storm.

In the centre of a forest, beneath a projecting rock, or rather within the jaws of a cavern, were seated two soldiers. Their horses were secured to a neighbouring pine-tree, the matted branches of which partially protected them from the rain.

The military companions were silent: one anxiously watched the features of the other; for, from the reclining posture of him who was the more richly attired, and from the langour of his half-sealed eye, he appeared to be wounded. No groan, however, or word expressive of suffering, escaped him; but his silence might proceed from a stern resolve to die like a warrior, unconfessing pain.

The taller cavalier now listened at the mouth of the cavern, as though he heard footsteps:— he grasped his sword; but the sound which had occasioned his alarm, was only the murmur of the blast which swept and whirled about the forest leaves, mingling at intervals with the faint roar of the distant cataract, that, swollen by the rains, dashed into the valley beneath. Again he watched his companion, chafed his temples, and wrapped his war-cloak more closely around him.

The wounded soldier, now raising his head, faintly addressed his associate:

"Thanks to thee, comrade and friend ; I could live, were it only to repay thee for kindness : but it may not be. Oh ! bearing to her, tell her that I died blessing her ; my last prayer was breathed for her peace and happiness. Farewell, beloved one ; I will grieve for me when I am no more ; I will Hope support and comfort thee ; in another world, Joanna, we shall meet again."

The speaker was Prince Louis, and he bent over him, with an unwonted tearful manly eye, was the faithful companion of his successes and misfortunes, Walter Courtenay.

A few words will suffice to inform the reader how these brave men had effected an escape from the perilous situation in which they were.

Impelled by the strength and fury which despair gives, Louis and the English Captains, with a small body of their soldiers, succeeded in extricating themselves from the toils by which they were encompassed. They had been

sued by the Hungarians to the verge of a wood,
 which the fleetness of their steeds enabled them
 to gain; there, hoping to elude the enemy by
 dispersing themselves through the forest, they
 rode in different directions, and were soon lost
 amidst copse-wood and thickets. Louis, Ca-
 millo, and the English Captain, shortly after-
 wards joined company, and, spurring on in a
 southerly direction towards Lucera, by night-
 fall they had reason to believe that they had far
 outstripped their pursuers. The storm, alluded
 to above, had just commenced; and Louis,
 sinking under the effects of a severe wound,
 which hitherto he had concealed from the know-
 ledge of his companions, was glad to take shelter
 within a cavern. Courtenay had carefully exa-
 mined the condition of the unfortunate Prince,
 stanching the blood that flowed from his breast,
 and wrapped him in his own mantle. He had
 likewise dispatched Camillo to ascertain whether
 any forester or herdsman dwelt in the neigh-
 bourhood, and to procure, if possible, some pro-
 visions.

" Prince Louis," said Courtenay, endeavouring to cheer his wounded brother-in-arms ; " is unworthy thy noble nature thus to despair. Those gashes may be deep, but they are not dangerous as thou dost conceive. Marry rain abates, and the skies are clearing ; we will soon place thee in safety in the loyal city of Benevento and thence the journey to Naples will be speedily accomplished."

Louis grasped the Englishman's hand ; his thoughts still dwelt upon one object.

" For myself, I reckon not death. The Queen's defenceless condition alone weighs upon my spirit. Say, wilt thou protect her, wilt thou defend her against her enemies when I am gone, yet I ask what is impossible. The robbers of Hungary have prevailed—the kingdom is torn from us. But thou mayst assist her in her flight : France, or haply thy own England, afford her an asylum. Oh ! promise me that thou wilt not quit the Queen until she be in safety, for then I shall die in peace."

Courtenay was affected at the deep devotion evinced by Louis for the woman he loved. He would have thought of Amalia, his own disastrous fortunes, and ruined condition; but every other consideration was merged in the anxiety which he felt for the wounded Prince.

"Thou shalt live," he cried, "to assist and defend Queen Joanna thyself. But thy hands are numbed, Prince Louis, and thy forehead is cold. Would to the Saints we were in some warm and sheltered cabin! but I will remove thee from the chill wind further into the cave."

He stooped, but found that he was speaking to one who heard him not, for Louis had sunk into a state of insensibility. Courtenay, now alarmed, stepped forwards to ascertain whether Camillo was approaching. No footstep was heard, and he feared to wind his horn, lest the sound should attract to the spot any stragglers of the enemy. He returned to his companion, and resolved, if it were possible, to kindle a fire. Collecting the leaves, which, from their dry and

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Camillo, who, among his various acquirements, professed some knowledge of the healing art, approached his master. He seemed in no wise alarmed at his appearance, but begged that Courtenay would allow him to pursue what method he chose with the wounded man.

"But thou hast neither cordials nor food, good Camillo," observed the Englishman; "and these, I ween, Prince Louis chiefly stands in need of."

"Thou dost labour under an error, brave Captain," answered the pedantic Roman; "in my route I fell in with one of those descendants of the wandering Sythians—I mean a barbarian Hun. From oldest time, as Tacitus and Strabo inform us, these people, now called Hungarians, were famous for indulging in strong potations, and for filling their stomachs with an undue proportion of food."

"What does this concern us?" exclaimed Courtenay impatiently; "finish thy story; the Hungarian soldier, I presume, had some roots or refreshments about him."

"Roots? by Jupiter! if Tacitus is to be be-

lieved, Hungarians eat not roots.—Well, miscreant, having lost his horse, was unable to keep pace with his companions, who, I have learnt, abandoning pursuit of us, have retreated again to their main body. Perceiving a *bisaccia* upon the barbarian's shoulders, I guessed what it might contain ; so I called upon him to surrender his leathern cupboard into my hands, whereupon the villain refusing so to do, by the assistance of St. Anthony and my javelin stretched him upon the ground."

"Haste thee, man, for the love of Heaven see, Prince Louis moves !"

"Ay, I did haste, brave Captain ; and cut the *bisaccia* from his shoulders, I bore it triumphantly away.—Behold ! verifying the words of Tacitus and Strabo, what a larder the villain carried about his person !"

Here the worthy Roman opened the knapsack and drew forth a flask containing ardent spirits, next sundry bunches of dried grapes ; and, and most welcome of all, a venison pasty.

"This is indeed a God-send !" exclaimed

Courtenay; "yet I hope thy blow, honest Camillo, did not deprive the Hungarian of his life; I even wish that thou hadst paid him the value of his provisions, notwithstanding he was our enemy.—Heaven grant that the Prince may be able to partake of this good cheer!"

Without further preliminary, the Roman caused his master to swallow some of the contents of the flask. Stronger than their own Italian wines, the cordial had the effect of awakening the physical energies, and of counteracting the benumbing influence of the cold which was fast icing the exhausted warrior's veins; in truth Louis was so greatly revived by the Hungarian's elixir of strong waters, that he shortly sat up, and began to converse.

Camillo, meantime, was busy in preparing their meal. A flag stone served for a table; a gourd, cut in twain, supplied the place of drinking-cups; and with his javelin he divided the venison pasty.

A repast at midnight in the heart of a desolate

forest, under any other circumstances, might have been pleasing and romantic enough ; here it was partaken in haste and alarm ; the enemy could not be far distant ; and the howl of wolves was heard on the neighbouring hills. They thought of the disastrous past ; and a future even more gloomy and fearful, presented itself to their anticipations.

Nevertheless they finished their meal ; strengthened and refreshed, the three companions in misfortune sank upon their knees, and their religion dictated, blessed their Maker and the Saints for the unexpected relief vouchsafed unto them.

In consequence of the feeble state of Leonardo, they resolved to remain in the cavern for a few hours. At dawn of day, if the Prince was unable to mount his horse, they would procure a mule from the nearest village, and proceed to Benevento, which city, the tourist will know, is only thirty-five miles distant from Naples.

Within the depth of the cavern, now a

warm and cheerful by the fire, the English Captain and Camillo fashioned a bed of leaves; the wounded Prince laid himself on this primitive couch, and wearied by exertion, as well as by pain and sorrow, soon sank into profound slumber.

Courtenay and the Roman, having, like true warriors, rubbed down their steeds, stationed themselves at the entrance. The storm had howled itself to rest; the moon, like a good Genius chasing away the angry spirits of the clouds, shone bright and clear, silvering the hanging rocks, and foaming torrents. They leant upon their swords, and spoke of the events of the times, sad in spirit, but not in despair.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUCHESS.

Sweet thing of innocence ! I sighed,
 How lovely now art thou !
 Pure as a pearl in ocean's tide,
 Or dew on morning's brow.
 Unknown a care, or darkening crime ;
 Who envies not thy happy prime ? M.

WE drop the curtain on war, the wild forest, the flight of the vanquished, to contemplate a scene of tranquil beauty—a scene displaying tenderer and more holy sympathies of our human nature.

The domestics had retired to rest in the Gothic villa among the mountains, occupied by the wife of Durazzo. Yet one sleepless eye was there—the eye of Maria, who still bent over the cradle of her slumbering child. The si-

star-light glided in through the stone-mullioned window; the beams so soft, so feeble, kissed the marble floor of the tapestried hall, and rested on the small white brow of the sinless sleeper. Oh! there was Durazzo's image, but unbranded by the fiery stamp of the scathing passions: there, too, was his soul without the shadow reflected upon it from hellish crime,—such as the Father was, but never again shall be.

The young mother sat, breathless, motionless, in her fond watching; her form bent forwards, her raven hair was thrown back from her forehead, and her lips were apart. To such a figure, in such an attitude, Praxiteles would have loved to have given marble life, fixing the beauteous lineaments in stone, and conferring on an expression, otherwise transitory, and varying with every passing thought, the glory of immortality.

"Sleep, sweet one!" whispered the watcher in softest tones; "may no visions of this sad earth cast their cloud on thy infantine spirit! may thy dreams be of paradise! revel and

glide through the bowers of fairy-land.—Thou smilest, dear one! art thou thinking of me, communing with an angel!"

Maria bent nearer; her lips continued move inaudibly, and a tear sparkled on her cheek. Oh! the deep, deep, inexhaustible well of mother's affection! what love in patience, purity, in self-sacrificing endurance, may equal that! and if the base and fallen, breathing the atmosphere of squalor and crime, cling to the offspring, think how strong shall be the golden chord binding the helpless one to the virtuous mother's heart!

Maria, her bosom full to overflowing with nature's gushing sympathies, stretched for a few moments her arms over the couch of the sleeper, and then involuntarily dropped upon her knees. Shine placidly, thou moon! on that mother's lifted brow! Dost thou, in sending thy trembling beams through the universe, look in the eyes of angel or saint, as they may hover between earth and paradise, dost thou look in

eyes so mild, so radiant, so full of unutterable love as those ?

And what was the mother's supplication ? she prayed that the God in whom she trusted, would not visit upon that unoffending child the sins of his father : that he might never know the ceaseless, corroding sorrows which preyed upon her own heart ; that the dreams of ambition would not enter in and madden his soul ; and that hereafter, his spirit might be admitted to the realms of peace, though she and her lord, whose crimes she thought she shared by silence and secrecy, might be consigned to woe for ever.

Maria's prayer was over ; she had again sunk into her seat, and, with anxious eye, resumed her silent watch, when the sound of the bell at the gate announced that some one desired admittance. It was not long before the person entered the room where Maria sat ; he proved to be an old and faithful domestic whom, some days previously, the Duchess had dispatched to the Neapolitan army, which she had learnt was

marching northward. The man had conveyed letters to her husband, and having arrived at a camp just before the fatal battle of Aquila place, he was induced to remain, and wait the issue of the conflict.

Breathless, and almost fainting through fatigue, his countenance full of terror and dismay, the old man now stood before his mistress.

"What has happened, Guido? I hope no misfortune has befallen thee on thy journey."

"Nothing has happened to me, my Duchess, but—"

"Fear not to speak—thou art strangely agitated; hast thou seen thy lord, the Duke of Durazzo? is he in health?"

"Yes, he is well, honoured lady; but he is come unto our ruined land!"

"Explain thyself."

"A battle has just been fought, and I have just but escaped hither with my life. The Queen's troops have been routed; the flower of her army is cut to pieces!"

Maria seemed petrified at the intelligence.

" Prince Louis, it is reported, has been taken prisoner, but I believe him to be slain, and—"

" My husband—" gasped the lady, " he—
e fought also on the side of the Queen?"

" Once he did, honoured Madam."

" Once?" and Maria, springing forwards, caught the old man by the arm, but seemed fearful of giving utterance to the question which trembled on her lips. She knew her husband's secret soul, but he had not as yet, to her knowledge, openly reared the standard of rebellion.

The poor man, for some minutes did not speak, but sighed deeply, and tears rolled down his cheeks.

" What hath the Duke done? dost thou hear?" cried Maria, again losing command of herself.

" Lady, I am thy noble husband's vassal, and such it becomes me not to pass an opinion on the actions of my lord; yet have I been ever taught to honour thy royal sister, the Queen."

" And thou dost act rightly in honouring Guido, so long as—but my husband—"

" Duchess of Durazzo, my lord hath the proper to take part against his country. In the heat of the battle followed by his retainers, he passed over to the enemy, and then, prostrated and stricken, the forces of the Queen gave way, and all was lost."

Though Maria had half anticipated that the old man disclosed, the full conviction that her husband would be hailed now as a traitor and a rebel, filled her heart with anguish. With an effort, she suppressed the emotions which seemed almost to choke her.

" Hush thee ! Guido ; I know thy loyal heart, and thy devotion to the Queen ; but in thy bosom thy sentiments to none save me, and thou dost value thy life."

" The life of a man already half in the grave is of little worth, honoured lady. They may torture me ; they may hang me ; yet there is one now besides my ruined Queen, to whom I will bend in fealty, and that is thyself."

"Come hither, Guido—hush! step softly—look upon yon slumbering child!—now say, wilt thou not still love and obey thy lord, for that innocent's sake?"

She pointed at the cherub sleeper—the waxen hand was placed beneath the head; the snowy lids reposed on the peach-like cheek, and the rose-bud lips were wreathed with smiles. There was an inexpressible, a holy charm in the sight; and in that still deep hour, hope half whispered to the fond mother's heart of brighter days; and it seemed as though an angel with winnowing wings guarded the repose of her first and only born.

The white-headed vassal bent his knee, and lifting his moistened eyes to Heaven, exclaimed:

"Yes, noble lady; thou hast spoken well; for the sake of that child, I will never desert my lord, but until this aged frame be laid beneath the turf, I will obey him, and love and honour thee!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANXIOUS HOURS.

Not friendless though abandoned by the base.

Eliza's Poem.

THE calamitous result of the battle of Agropoli was still unknown in Naples. Various reports, all equally untrue, agitated the City, and the inhabitants remained in that uncertainty and suspense, which ever elate and depress the human heart, more than the knowledge of decided success or misfortune.

At length a body of Calabrians arrived covered with wounds, together with some stragglers amounting to about a hundred men of Courtenay's band of Adventurers. These announced the terrible fact of the overthrow of the Queen.

army, and the rapid advance of the Hungarian victor upon the City of Naples. The inhabitants were terrified, beyond the power of language to describe. But instead of consolidating their numbers, arming such as were capable of wielding pike or lance, and guarding the principal entrances into the City, they performed only acts of superstition, that blind deity to which the Italians bow beyond every other European nation. All the churches were crowded. Long files of black-stoled monks, issuing from their convents, walked in procession through the streets. Here a relic box was placed at the corner of a piazza, surrounded by a due number of burning tapers, so that all, as they passed, might cross themselves, and solicit the saint to avert the impending calamity. There, borne on the backs of lusty Friars, was seen a waxen figure, the representative of the Virgin Mary; the holy mother was arrayed in stiff bodice, and embroidered gown, and her head, being set upon wires, bowed from time to time; which motion,

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the good fathers said, was a token of her favour, and the undoubted work of God. The astonished people, believing this, sank on their knees in the miry street, repeating aloud their 'Ave Marias,' and praying even with tears in their eyes.

It happened however, say some chroniclers waggishly, that, on this occasion, while one of those effigies of the Divine Mother was being carried along, the Friars, who were honoured with the burden, either from some obstruction in the pavement, or from having drunk too much *Lachryma Christi*, missed their footing and fell; whereupon the Virgin Mary was dashed with such violence upon the stones, that the case, in which she was enshrined, was shattered to pieces, her bodice covered with mud, and her head knocked from off her shoulders. The people esteeming this a bad omen, wept bitterly out in a bitter manner, and beat their breasts in despair. But the monks, piously gathering up the fragments together, assured them that this misfortune had happened on account of

sins; and if each individual in the crowd would give a paulo, so that an extra mass might be said in the divers Neapolitan churches, the Virgin, they would take upon themselves to declare, would be propitiated. "We will! we will!" cried the people, and sank again before the shattered image, and kissed the very ground on which it stood.

Yet in all ages, and among all communities, some are found who yield not to the weakness and dotage of their fellow men; who stem the tide of popular prejudice, and think and act as reason and nature dictate. Such in Naples turned in pity and disgust from the mummary described above. They breathed a silent prayer to their God that he would not desert them in their hour of need. They thought of Louis their absent Prince and leader, and resolved on dispatching messengers to ascertain whether he had escaped the carnage, or whether he had fallen; then they dared imagine that the standard of liberty might be reared on the walls,

and that Naples might yet defy the barbarous invader.

Among the latter number of rational individuals, as may be supposed, was Queen Joanna. Her anguish, however, in proportion as her situation was exalted, exceeded the anguish of others; a crown was torn from her brow, and the husband she feared was no more. She had ceased to hear the words of those around her, and the cries of her bleeding country rang like a death knell in her ear.

Some hours after the announcement of this fatal event, the Queen, weeping and leaning on Amalia, was pacing the battlements that surrounded the northern tower of Castel Nuovo. This situation commanded a view of the principal roads which led to Naples. From time to time Joanna could discern parties of soldiers entering the City: some travelled slowly as if exhausted and way-worn; others were borne upon lightning, but as yet no banner or martial equipage, no indication of the approach of Louis. The Queen

bent over the balustrade ; her eye surveyed the doomed City, and then rested on the hills which rose beyond. Her look betokened more than melancholy, more than sorrow—agony wrung her spirit. Amalia stood near, and endeavoured to impart to her consolation ; but Joanna, at each renewed effort which her companion made to alleviate her distress, could only shed tears, and silently embrace her.

“ How shall I act ? ” she cried ; “ oh Heaven ! pity my condition ! yon beautiful City, my love, my pride, will soon groan beneath the oppressor, or its streets must stream with blood. For myself, I am branded with infamy ; I am held up to the world as a monster, as—as— ” she shuddered, and clasping her hands, whispered with quivering lips—“ as a murderess ! ”

“ Reck not the tongues of evil men ; ” said Amalia. “ The good believe thee all that thou art ; and though for awhile the night of calumny and misfortune may darken around us, never doubt but a morning of prosperity will arise.”

"Thou dost harbour hopes, dear girl, which I cannot entertain. One of the bitterest pains too, which I endure, arises from the beholding those, whom I once esteemed my friends, turn enemies and traitors. Who could have imagined that Durazzo my own kinsman, would have deserted me!"

"Nay, I marvel not at the villany of that intriguing man. I ever shuddered when he crossed my path; he seemed to me some sort of evil shedding a blight, a fear on all who met him. And yet thy sister, Maria—strange versatility of the human heart—loves him tenderly."

"See! see!" exclaimed Joanna, pointing to Mount St. Angelo, "yon group of soldiers—perhaps they are the officers whom we dispatched this morning in search of Louis. Oh! have you found him, is he returning with them?"

The tattered and forlorn appearance of the soldiers as they drew nearer to the City, dispelled the notion that royalty was there. They proved

a few Calabrian archers, winding their mournful way towards the gates, and like their predecessors, bearing wounded men upon their shoulders.

"Amalia!" exclaimed Joanna in the bitterest disappointment; "what would I give to be assured that Louis is in safety! oh! if he be no more, as my fears whisper, then I shall not reck if the tyrant of Hungary exile or imprison me: whether I be a Queen or a peasant, it will matter not."

Joanna, in the bitter abandonment of a despairing spirit, leant upon Amalia, whose tears now mingled with her own.

"He is safe;" said the girl; "be consoled; Heaven will protect him. But, Joanna, amid thy own sufferings, thou dost seem to forget that my sorrows oppress me."

This observation which conveyed a gentle reproach, touched Joanna; for whatever might have been her errors in common with females placed in her exalted station, they did not include selfishness, or callosity of heart.

"Yes, thou hast sorrows, dear girl, I grant;

thou likewise must deeply grieve for thy brother Louis. But ah! Amalia, thou dost thou canst not love him like me."

"I love him as a sister should love a brother. But thinkest thou, Joannon, that where the band bled, if indeed he have fallen, another would not fight by his side and scorn to quit the dreadful field with life? no, he were no warrior if he did not this; I should almost despise him if he refused to die."

"That sentiment is worthy a daughter of Angevine race;" answered the Queen. "who may the warrior be that hath found death with my husband? nay, Amalia, do not mention although for a long period thou hast forbidden mentioning to me the name of the English traitor, I fear he is not forgotten. But what we now to do with pride! our kingdom, our laurels are faded for ever; we have only blood of Anjou to boast of; and for aught I know the world will now consider Walter Courtenay a mate for a Princess of Naples."

The attention of the affectionate relatives was suddenly arrested by shouts which were borne faintly from a distance. Along the *Strada Capuana*, they observed a company of peasants rapidly approaching the City. The Queen and Amalia were alarmed, imagining that the countrymen might be flying from the advancing army of the victorious enemy. Presently, however, the cry of "il Re! il Re! the King! the King!" met their ear; and floating on the breeze, and waving in front of a line of soldiers, was seen the Royal Angevine banner. The martial appearance of Italian barons and counts could not be mistaken; and now the deep blast of the royal trumpet, a prolonged and peculiar note, rang from the hill to the City.

Joanna rushed forwards to the edge of the battlement; she stretched her arms towards the welcome sight, and tears of ecstasy streaming from her eyes, she cried convulsively—

"O God be praised! it is he! it is my husband!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DETERMINATION.

Hang out our banners on the outer wall,
 The cry is still they come, our castle's strength
 Will laugh a siege to scorn.

Macbeth.

A GROUP of warriors and statesmen, bare-headed and standing, was assembled in the great hall of Castel-Nuovo. The most conspicuous ornament of these, were the Bishop of Cavaillon, the High Constable of the kingdom, Nicola Acciajuoli, Boccaccio, and the English Captain.

In the centre of their circle, half-reclined on a couch, was seen Prince Louis of Tarentum. He was emaciated and pale, and his weakness obliged him to maintain constantly the same position. His journey from the Apennines to Naples, had been performed upon a

At the town of Benevento, the Prince and Courtenay had fallen in with some Puglian Barons and Knights of St. John, who had escaped from the field of Aquila; and this circumstance accounted for the martial appearance which the royal party had made when entering the capital.

Though his body might be worn, the spirit of Louis was unquelled; and, as he gazed on the faithful few who surrounded him, his eye still beamed with resolution and valour. Joanna, since her first embrace of transport, had never quitted his side. She now fanned his fevered brow; she checked him if he spoke too much, or too ardently; and worthy of her grandfather, the great King Robert, she mingled her counsels with those of the Barons around.

Grouping at a distance were the maids of Honour, and amidst them Amalia was seated; they witnessed the proceedings in the royal hall, for the customs of the Court permitted the presence of ladies in any public consultations at which the Queen attended.

"Thanks to ye all, my brave companions in arms!" Louis was heard to say; "ye achieved in battle all that warriors could do, and for brave Courtenay of England! who didst rescue me when taken prisoner; who didst watch over me when I lay wounded in the Apennine forests. I have not words wherewith to speak my gratitude. In the presence of the Barons, advance, and thank my consort, the Queen, likewise tender to her thanks."

Amalia heard the words of Louis, but was unable to turn her eyes to the scene. Her cheeks glowed, and her heart fluttered with unusual sensations of love and delight. Courtenay stepped forwards, and, dropping on one knee, kissed the fair hand which Joanna extended to him.

"God repay thee for thy services, noble warrior! if it be not in our power to requite thee," exclaimed the Queen; "I shall never, while I retain life, forget thy fidelity and kindness, my lord."

Louis continued to speak—"The aggressor

Hungary, Barons and Knights, so far hath prevailed; but let us not despair.—Naples is strong—there are thousands, I am persuaded, within her walls, who will shed the last drop of their blood, ere yield to the trans-Alpine robber. Is there, then, one amongst us who would counsel for a surrender? who desires to become a bondman to the tyrant of Hungary?"

The Barons returned no answer, but each mechanically laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword.

"I will receive your silence, noble friends, as an earnest of your patriotic resolution. Yes, let us rally our troops—let us man the walls—let us hoist the standard of liberty, and Naples shall yet be saved!"

"Amen!" cried the Barons; "we will resist the enemy, while we have power to wield our swords—while one stone remains upon another in the walls of Naples!"

"May God, the protector of innocence, and the punisher of guilt, favour our cause!" responded Queen Joanna.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MASSACRE.

Ay, kill them all—have women than do crimes!

—I'm settled, and bent up.

Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

Shelton

WHILE the scenes just described were passing in the city of Naples, the Hungarian movement was steadily advancing into the country. The great terror which the fatal battle of Aquila had instilled into the minds of the people, that, wherever the Hungarians appeared, Neapolitans fled before them. Villages were forsaken, towns were vacated, and every sort of property lay at the mercy of the spoiler. Nothing was to be seen but desolated fields and smoking ruins. In the once happy valleys heard the wail of the widow, as her husband

slaughtered at his cottage door. The ruined maiden wept over her violated innocence; and fatherless children shrieked in their mothers' arms, scarcely able to comprehend the meaning of those scenes of terror and desolation.

As yet no town had offered resistance to the invader; but the Hungarian army arriving before Benevento, that ancient place refused to open its gates. Whether the remains of classic antiquity with which Benevento abounds, inspired the inhabitants with the valour of by-gone ages; or whether the remembrance of the victory gained in the vicinity by Charles of Anjou, and which had placed the Angevine line upon the throne of Naples, filled their souls with sentiments of more than ordinary attachment to Joanna, it would be difficult to determine. The Podestà, however, seconded by the stout old Duke of Benevento, displayed the standard of the Queen, posted their troops along the walls, and defied the ultramontane hordes.

The Hungarian King would have pressed on

for the capital, but the insolence of this
cial governor highly exasperated him,
therefore invested the rebellious town with
whole army, and determined upon making
inhabitants an example of terror, which
deter other places from a similar resistance.

The beleaguering engines were prepared,
the troops ready to assault the walls of
vento at a moment's notice.

In the royal pavilion, distinguished from
tents, by its costly furniture, and its magnificent
gold top, sat the despot of Hungary.
a middle-aged man, tall and gaunt; his
had little of the impress of royalty stamped
thom : his brow was low, and deeply furrowed
and his eyes were small, but they glowed
coals of fire. He was a tyrant to the end
the term ; one of those men who seem to
the world only to destroy what others
one of those scourges permitted to appear
intervals of ages, whose path is watered
tears of their persecuted fellow creatures.

whose names are encircled through all time by a halo of blood.

Before the monarch stood two individuals who had become his principal advisers—the Bishop of Waradin, late Friar Robert, and the Duke of Durazzo; the latter was to head the assault upon Benevento, and he now waited the final orders of the king.

The Royal Hungarian, whose wrath seldom found vent in stormy exclamation, spoke his sentiments in an extremely calm and deliberate manner. Heretic as he was, defying the Pope, and deriding his excommunication, he professed a reverence for divine things, and affected to be governed in all his actions by the principles of religion.

“My lord Bishop, and noble Duke,” he said; “of a verity we shall be able to take this kennel of dogs on the first assault. Are the gibbets erected whereon to hang the Podestà, and chief men?”

Durazzo informed him that the gibbets were prepared.

"Art thou dreaming of mercy, my lord Bishop?" asked the Sovereign of Robert; "methinks thou dost look passing sedate!"

"Mercy! King of Hungary!" replied the Bishop, adjusting the lofty mitre on his head. "true Saint Jerome dost command us to show mercy even unto our foes; but, by the Mother! these rebels are more than common enemies; by questioning thy rights, they place thy crown in jeopardy, therefore, *Propter dignitatem*, the chief men ought to perish."

"The death of a few principals, holy Father, will scarcely appease my indignation. Treacherous dogs! reptiles! daring to resist my word and beard me to my face!—may I, dost thou think, without offending Heaven, order every man in Benevento to be slain?"

"Every man?—let me reflect, your Majesty!—every man to be slaughtered! what dost thou say? Jewish leader against the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Perizzites? he put them to the sword both great and small, because they did not resist the Children of Israel. Oh King of

gary ! these men in like manner, oppose thee, their just lord and master ; therefore, I am of opinion, that without offending Heaven, thou mayest smite them, hip and thigh, yea, give them all to the sword !”

“ Thy reasoning is just, reverend Bishop, and pleaseth me ;” observed Durazzo. “ When will your Highness dispatch me to assault the town ?”

“ Stay, one moment, noble Duke !” said the monarch thoughtfully ; “ thou shalt flesh thy valour upon the miscreants in due time. Didst thou mean to assert, Bishop of Waradin, by thy expression of “ smite them hip and thigh,” that all the women and children also, within the town, might be destroyed ?”

“ Women and children ! *mulieres et infantes*. I did not state quite this, my son ; but let me ponder—let me call to mind our canonical laws, and the writings of the fathers ; probably, under existing circumstances, they will give authority for the deed.”

No smile relaxed the features of the King of Hungary, for in the "curtained gloom" of his beighted mind, he really believed that God sanctioned his proceedings, while he called the wretched Robert an oracle of holy wisdom.

"My wrath! my wrath!" cried the King. "I feel that a greater oblation must be made at the altar of justice, than the simple death of the Beneventine Burghers."

"I admit," said Robert, "that thy clamours and indignation against yonder town are just and praise-worthy." The Bishop here, taking off his mitre, lifted his hands to Heaven. "'O Madonna,' assist me in giving advice to this King, for thy servant is weak; yea, thou knowest I am loaded with worldly honours which I despise as a worm of the sod, a poor orring child of the world."

"Haste thee, Bishop of Waradin!" exclaimed the monarch.

The Prelate, with the semblance of humility, replaced the jewelled mitre upon his head!

" Well, my son, to appease thy just wrath, and to strike terror into thy foes, thou dost crave permission to smite, together with the men, all the women and children in Benevento. *Deus vult*: the women, no doubt, have incited their husbands to be rebellious; the children, should they be suffered to attain manhood, would imitate their stiff-necked fathers: this being the case, then, it will be an act of necessity, of self-defence, to slaughter great and small: yea, they merit their punishment; their blood be upon their own heads. Good and mighty king! with unsoiled hands, and a quiet conscience, thou mayest issue thy orders to slay, and utterly exterminate man, woman, and child, all that liveth in the rebellious city of Benevento!"

Such was the decision at which Robert, Bishop of Waradin, arrived. The license to indulge his blood-thirsty propensities, gave high satisfaction to the Hungarian King, and Durazzo immediately proceeded to carry the barbarous decree into execution.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RIVALS.

What! wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee?
Merchant of Venice.

Merchant of Venice.

THE fair and classic City of Benevento was assaulted with great fury by the Duke of De-
 in a short time it was captured, and
 inhabitants, with the exception of a few w-
 escaped to the mountains, and some females
 were reserved for the chief Hungarian o-
 were put to death. This inhuman ma-
 worthy of an Alaric, or a Jenghis Khan,
 instil terror into the minds of some of the
 politans; but it raised the fury of oth-
 madness. In the capital, however, the i-
 gence created the utmost excitement and d-

The Trans-Alpine tyrant was in earnest conversation with his counsellor, the Bishop of Waradin, when Durazzo entered his presence, reeking from the slaughter of the innocent people. His limbs were weary, his features were grim with dust and blood, and he flung down his iron gauntlets and crimsoned sword, exclaiming that he had performed a work that day worthy of the Viceroy of Naples. The king greeted him with a shew of cordiality ; we scarcely can say which of the two possessed the blacker heart, or was the most accomplished villain. Each had his own motives of action, and carried out his own plan of aggrandizement ; but it was certain that they were deadly enemies, suspicious of each other, and seeking every opportunity to wreak personal vengeance.

The Hungarian King, Durazzo and the Prelate sat down to a repast in the royal tent. It was nearly concluded, and their attendants had withdrawn, with the exception of the Bishop's Servitor, Forester, when Durazzo from extreme fatigue,

sank into a deep sleep, with his goblet beside him.

The monarch gazed upon the slumberer he considered, to a certain extent, his rival, with feelings of inexpressible hatred. He was not only a private enemy, but a political enemy, for his private cause, also, for harbouring enmity against him: Durazzo had married covertly Joanna's sister, the lady of whom the King had been deeply enamoured, but whose marriage we have stated on a previous occasion, he vainly solicited.

The monarch beckoned Robert aside, and conversed with his favourite in a low voice.

"Tell me, good Robert!" he said, laying his finger upon the Prelate's robe; "tell me, dost thou not imagine Durazzo's real motive in inviting me to Naples?"

"Not to revenge thy brother's death," answered the malicious Ecclesiastic, "but to possess the crown of Naples; to whom Durazzo was likewise obnoxious; that thou mightst enjoy thy just heritage; but that he, through thy death, might eventually become king."

"King? how?" exclaimed the Hungarian;
"the villain himself become king? thou dost
astonish me, my lord Bishop!"

"*Submissâ voce*, softly, my son, and I will
show thee how. I intended ere long to unbosom
my suspicions unto thee, even if thou hadst not
solicited me so to do. Know then, the Duke is not
sufficiently powerful to cope with the adulteress
Joanna alone; so it appears to me he hath even
sent for thee to expel her with her paramour
Louis: this being effected, I am strongly of
opinion that he intends to compass thy destruc-
tion, and, with his wife Maria, to ascend the
throne."

The Monarch arose in a fury, and his sword
flew from its scabbard.

"It is as thou dost say! dotard that I was to
place my confidence in this Neapolitan Duke!
but, by the Lord, he shall die this moment!"

"Hold! hold! my son: *iram cohibere conve-*
niat, bridle thy rage; I state my conviction, yet
it is but a surmise after all; we have no proof

as yet to justify such a violent proceeding on the world."

"He shall die!" repeated the royal Hunter; "but, Heaven assail me! I will not pollute my hand with the miscreant's blood."

"Thou dost speak wisely;" said the Bishop; "the king must not demean himself by putting to death with his own hand, his criminal vassals. At first, on second thoughts, I am of opinion that he might die to advantage this hour."

"But the world—the necessary proceedings of which thou dost hint of, holy Bishop?"

"My son, in an affair of this high importance, Heaven will pardon a little artifice on the part of its servants. We will state that he has expired in the king's tent, in consequence of the severe wounds received in the late assassination."

"Good, my lord Bishop. But will you not dispatch the traitor? beset me, how long he sleeps yonder?"

"I dare not myself undertake the execution; but as Joel ran the nail into the

of the slumbering Sisera, my faithful henchman shall rid the earth of this dangerous plotter."

Forester, during the whispered conversation of the king and his counsellor, had stood in a remote corner of the tent. The personal appearance of our old friend had undergone a striking alteration since we last beheld him at Naples: with his master's advancement, he had assumed gayer apparel; his party-coloured doublet was girded by a flowing green sash; a little Hungarian mantle, tastefully embroidered, dropped over his right shoulder; his boots were of yellow leather, and, in his flat cloth cap, a heron's feather nodded "knowingly" on one side.

Robert beckoned, and Forester, with reverence in his manner approaching to awe, drew near the royal table.

"Sirrah!" said the Bishop, "we wish thee to perform a little act of usefulness to thy King and country."

A low genuflection on the part of Forester, intimated that his services were at their disposal.

" Being an Englishman, I presume," said the Monarch, " thou hast a steady hand, and art not from cold steel."

" Steady hand—cold steel—great King don me, I do not exactly understand; but your Highness means to ask if I have a hand in guiding the cold steel over the beard, I'll yield to no one in that particular of business."

Robert immediately undeceived the squire, and, holding the King's dagger toward him, commanded him, in a peremptory manner, to strike it into the heart of the slumbering Duke.

Forester drew back—he was struck with amazement and horror; he trembled from head to foot; and nothing could be more striking than the whole appearance of this man of war.

" What!" cried the Prelate; " dost thou hesitate to perform our behest? seize thy weapon!"

Forester at length found power to speak, and murmured in broken and faltering accents:

"Dost thou ask me, my lord Bishop, to kill the royal Duke of Durazzo? my arm, I grant, is strong enough, nor do I fear to wield a dagger; but great King of Hungary, and holy Bishop of Waradin! I pray you to send for an assassin to perform that deed of butchery; for my heart sickens, and my nature revolts at it."

"And why, thou brainless villain?" asked Robert: "didst thou not tell me that, in the villa at Baïse, Durazzo once threatened thy life? revenge thyself, man, revenge thyself!"

"We Englishmen," continued the henchman, "fear not blood; nor do we hesitate to stab and to slay in honourable warfare; but to plunge that dagger into the heart of one who is slumbering—it would be cowardly, it would be horribly base! my conscience would never sleep afterwards: God would never forgive me—no never!"

"Dim-sighted and scrupulous fool!" said Robert; "be there error in the deed I will absolve thee; yet if I see no crime in ridding Naples of

its chief enemy, how darest thou imagine such can exist? take the weapon, then, seeest where the Duke's throat is uncovered—strike there!”

“Ay,” whispered the Monarch, with a pallid scowl; “do as thou art commanded by Heaven! thou shalt die thyself!”

Forester was in a dreadful state of agitation. To murder another, or to submit to be murdered himself—such was the choice given him. Uninterested and conscientious men—the Servitor, if placed in a similar position, have been biased, perhaps, by that universal law of nature—self-preservation. It is not ordinary, therefore, that the Englishman, driven to desperation, nerved his heart, and snatched the weapon from the hand of his blood-thirsty master.

He approached the slumbering Duraz with a stealthy step; the life of this dark and treacherous intriguer seemed to vibrate in the balance, and to hang by a thread; yet Forester could

he said to design murder, being compelled on peril of his own life, to commit the dreadful deed. He stood with the weapon gleaming above his victim; those fiery eyes were sealed, and that lately working brow was calm—will he awake again before the judgment-day!—the wretched Forester was about to dash the steel into the sleeper's bosom, when the latter, as if from a dream, suddenly started, and sprang upon his feet.

"Ha! villain!" exclaimed the Duke; "what meanest thou? what wouldst thou do with that weapon?"

Forester whose blood ran cold, and whose knees, for very terror, knocked each other, made a retrograde movement; but presently recovering his presence of mind, and hitting with his natural shrewdness, upon a plausible tale, he stammered:—

"The—the—this dagger?—I am sorry, your Grace, that my step across the tent should have awoke you from your sleep."

"Knave! what didst thou intend with that weapon, I demand? for, by the studded leather, I perceive it belongs to the King."

"Yes, soothly it does;" answered Forster. "I heard his Highness say that his dagger was without an edge, and being somewhat adroit at sharpening weapons, I offered my services; and, my lord Duke, I was just in the act of stepping into the Bishop's tent, when your Grace suddenly awoke."

The penetrating Durazzo, so rarely deceived, was for once overreached by the subtle Englishman; the deadly suspicion, which at first possessed his mind, entirely vanished. He relaxed his harsh features; he bade the Scotchman begone, and stalked towards the King's chamber, seemed calmly conversing with the monarch, and Robert, in the further compartment of the

CHAPTER XXII.

LOVE'S RESOLVE.

All whom she loved on earth were there to die ;
And they must perish from her, one by one,
And her soul bleed with each, till all are gone.

Croly.

NIGHT had deepened ; the soft and silver-rays of the summer moon were falling on an antique cross of stone which stood by the way side about a mile from Benevento. The hum of the vast Hungarian army was heard from the distance like the rush of mighty waters ; all beside was quiet : the beetle winged her " drowsy flight ;" the night-breeze kissed the slumbering rose's dewy lip ; and the stars looked at their own sweet eyes in the bright and sheety river.

At the foot of the stone cross a woman was kneeling ; her hands clasped, and her tearful

gaze rivetted on that emblem of Christ's sufferings, she appeared absorbed in prayer. Her head was partially enveloped in a dark hood, and a rich mantle of the same material was drawn around her slight and graceful form. From the elegance of her costume, as well as from the indescribable nobility of soul that breathed from her classic and pale features, she was evidently a person removed from the common sphere of life.

Her adoration having been completely satisfied, the lady seated herself on the turf; she trembled violently, and appeared even afraid to cast her eyes around her; and presently stooping down with her hands covering her face, she burst into tears.

The heart-broken and desolate female kneeling at the foot of that cross, was the wife of the Duke of Durazzo.

Maria had not beheld her husband since the period when, having bestowed on him unwearied attention and care, she saw him rise con-

cent from a bed of sickness. She was now fully aware that he had participated in the murder of Prince Andrea, and she knew him to be a traitor to the Queen her sister ; yet she loved him still. It is strange, but so are we constituted ; we may conceive a deep passion, although conscious the while of the unworthiness of the object : we may detest the person's character, and convince our reason of our dotage and error ; but the heart, the heart, will not be guided by the spirit's will !

Maria, after the night on which her old domestic Guido first brought her intelligence of the battle of Aquila, had heard from time to time of the rapid progress of the Hungarians, and the fearful outrages they committed. Her husband, she well knew, continued with the enemy ; fame gave a trumpet-tongue to his deeds of blood, and he was spoken of as the most active and scientific general in the army of the trans-Alpine King.

Ruin darkened over the land, and worse than ruin menaced her sister Joanna whom she sin-

cerely loved. She dared not betray Du by unfolding the truth : she dared not cast herself at the feet of the Queen, since Joanna would, without a doubt, believe her in league with her ambitious husband, the both plotting to supplant her, and mount the throne. To remain inactive amidst such a state of war surpassed her powers of forbearance : her conscience bitterly reproached her for not more resolutely stood between the aspiring razzo and the ruin of her country : yet even now whispered that it was not too late she would fly to her husband ere the invincible army had marched upon Naples, and, by treaties and tears, prevail upon him to spare the innocent, to spare Joanna, and counsel the Hungarian King to slaughter no more of a people who had rendered him no injury.

In pursuance of this resolution, she had journeyed to Benevento attended only by her faithful servant, the old Guido ; yet it was but a few days prior to the time that we have introduced

our pages, that this Italian *Servitóre* was slain. A Hungarian courier passing rapidly on horse-back, because the poor fellow did not, or could not move out of the path so speedily as the ruffian wished, had thrust his spear at him, which, entering his breast, caused his death on the spot.

Maria was now alone, fearful and agitated indeed, and supported only by a consideration of the importance attached to her mission. She was within a short distance of Benevento, but the frightful massacre of its inhabitants had been perpetrated; the scene was as a desert place; no citizen hurried along the once busy thoroughfare, and each peasant's cabin was tenantless, for every Italian who had escaped the sword of the enemy, had fled to the neighbouring mountains.

But how was a frail woman to pass through a camp of rude soldiery? would not the Hungarians offer her insult, or stop her progress? were she to declare herself to be Durazzo's wife, who would believe the tale? would they not

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callous heart of the barbarous Hungarian. At length Maria bethought her of money; and gold, the true cake to Cerberus, triumphed over and silenced the scruples of the soldier.

The lady tremblingly wound her way amid the tents, where some had retired to slumber, and others to indulge those hibacious propensities which characterized the Hungarians of that age. As she passed on, ribald language, and shouts of merriment assailed her ears; and she feared to make inquiries relative to the direction she should pursue in order to find Durazzo. A drunken *heyduke*, or foot-soldier, now reeled across her path, and rudely seized her by the arm.

"What! my lily of Italy! hast thou escaped the bloody carnival we've been keeping in Benevento yonder? and comest seeking a lover among our brave fellows here? by king Stephen's crown!* but thou shalt find me handsomer than

* The famous Hungarian crown of most costly workmanship, which was given by Pope Silvester to King Stephen in the eleventh century.

rather consider her an impostor, or a feather-light character, and treat her as such. Come what may, she must see her husband on the morrow, so had it been rumoured. The Hungarian King would continue his march in order to attack the fated capital.

She arose in indecision—she seated herself again, still trembling and weeping. At length she seemed to have nerved her heart, and took a resolution, for she bent once more before the cross of her worship, soliciting divine protection, and then hurried along the road in the direction of the Hungarian camp.

* * * * *

"An Italian art thou, my pretty don't thou?" said a sentinel to Maria, as the latter endeavored to pass one of the enemy's outposts. "Spare me, I'm not one though to be won over by beauty. Perhaps thou art a spy from Naples employed by Jezebel Joanna; thou must advance no farther."

Her agonized and pleading looks, her entreaties and supplications, worked no effect upon

callous heart of the barbarous Hungarian. At length Maria bethought her of money; and gold, the true cake to Cerberus, triumphed over and silenced the scruples of the soldier.

The lady tremblingly wound her way amid the tents, where some had retired to slumber, and others to indulge those bibacious propensities which characterized the Hungarians of that age. As she passed on, ribald language, and shouts of merriment assailed her ears; and she feared to make inquiries relative to the direction she should pursue in order to find Durazzo. A drunken *heyduke*, or foot-soldier, now reeled across her path, and rudely seized her by the arm.

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any waywode of them all!—so, my fairy South! trip thou at once to my tent."

The agitation and terror of Maria conceived; she struggled in the rude grasp of the intoxicated soldier; she shrieked aloud, but her cries only had the effect of drawing around her some of the heyduke's friends, who burst into shouts of laughter, and cheered the ruffian.

"What goes forward here, my master?" exclaimed a man approaching the group, whose gold laced cap and feather, richly embroidered mantle, and short gilt staff, denoted him as a civil appointment under some Hungarian prince, or high ecclesiastic.

"Nothing of any moment, fair sir;" answered a by-stander. "It is but Huniades of the axe troop claiming his sweetheart."

But the man with the gilt staff, having heard Maria's cries and expostulations, seemed strangely excited—"Make way, knaves!" he exclaimed, thrusting aside the men, and biting his baton of office—"ye know me."

let any soldier resist my commands at his peril!"

In another minute the speaker stood before the distressed lady, and, as the strong moonlight fell upon her face, he seemed to recollect her pale and agitated features; Maria, likewise, recognized in him an individual whom she had frequently seen in the Castel-Nuovo at Naples.

"Save me!" she cried, rushing towards him, and clinging to his arm; "do I not behold Father Robert's attendant?—kind, kind Forester, save me!"

"I will, Duchess!" cried the honest fellow, scowling on those around him; "ye little ween, Hungarians, whom ye have insulted; but let me pass forward with the lady, or I will not answer for your heads."

The men, bound to respect the authority of a Bishop's henchman, and perceiving that the female was indeed a person of some consequence, slunk back, and offered no further molestation.

"Take me to my husband's tent, good For-

ester; and if gold will repay thee for thy kindness, thou shalt ere long receive ample recompense.

“Honoured lady! for serving such as I, not gold, but a remembrance of the action will be a sufficient reward.”

And he who, a few hours previously, was in the direction of his iniquitous master, and had driven the steel into the heart of Mr. M., now conducted her, with the tenderest care, to the tent which he occupied.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SUPPLICATION.

With eye of tears, and lip of prayer,
 She kneels to him who will not spare,
 Yet though he crush love's fond endeavour,
 Though hope may flee, and fate may sever,
 Her heart will love her lord for ever.

MS.

THE policy of Durazzo was to render the Hungarian King in the eyes of the people as cruel and tyrannical as possible, for on the odium which might attach to his character, he based his hopes of raising, by and bye, a general rebellion against him, and thereby supplanting him in the kingdom. This view of his position, independently of his own blood-thirsty nature, will in part account for his sanguinary deeds, since he professed himself to be but an instrument in the hands of

the Monarch. True, he was in arms against his country, yet he hoped hereafter to make it appear that he had waged war not against his country, but its corrupt rulers—Joanna and Prince Louis.

The Duke, by the light of a cresset hung from the summit of his tent, was now looking over a drawing or chart of the Bay and City of Naples. He was in reality, the leader of the invading army ; for the King of Hungary, though ever he might mistrust his ultimate intentions, and resolve to frustrate them, placed in him his confidence in his abilities as a general.

Durazzo was revolving in his mind the best manner for conducting the intended assault upon the capital. The weakest points of the city walls, and the towers that offered the greatest probability of success by escalade, were the objects to which his attention was directed. If the city won, Queen Joanna and her party would be compelled to fly, or yield themselves prisoners of state ; and the momentous ques-

would in a brief time be decided, for it had been resolved to put the troops in motion on the ensuing day.

The curtain of the Duke's tent was gently moved aside, and the slight figure of Maria, in her dark velvet habit, tremblingly advanced. Before Durazzo had perceived the intruder, she had sunk upon her knees. He then raised his head, and gazing on that pallid face, on which the dim lamp cast even a whiter lustre—those clasped hands, and streaming eyes, while the beautiful masses of her raven hair fell in disorder on her rich dress, he started back as if an apparition of some blest being with whom his guilty soul could hold no communion, was bending before him.

"Art thou ignorant who I am?" faltered Maria; "dost thou not know thy own wife?"

"Ha!" cried Durazzo, recollecting himself; "and what dost thou here? I did, in truth expect the Witch of Endor to appear before me, sooner than thyself."

" Pardon me ! I could not forbear
hither—forgive me, Durazzo !"

" Cease this tragic mummerly !—what
business with me, I ask !"

" I have not beheld thee for many long
and a wife's solicitude for her absent lord
surely well be excused."

" Is this all ! I would have sent for thee
had needed thy presence ; thou hast acted
imprudently ; but as the Saints live ! thou
not be recognized here."

" (One moment hear me, Durazzo !"

" Nay, not a moment—I will immediately
order servants whom I can trust, to take thee
back to the villa "

" No, no !" cried Maria, " do not, I
thee, do not send me so hastily from thee "

She drew nearer, and, clasping her husband's
knees, looked piteously into his face.

" You have not inquired respecting
one, Durazzo—have you no regard for
my faint son ?"

The father shaded his eyes; his heart half relented, and his savage nature warmed towards the faithful creature at his feet.

"Yes, I love the urchin, and thee too, thou silly wench. Come, cease this needless agitation; I tell thee I am not angry with thee."

Maria, subdued by those words of unwonted kindness, hung on his neck, and shed tears of joy upon his bosom. Hers was one of those spirits not frequently met with in the chilled atmosphere which encompasses the high and nobly born; spirits whose fidelity no neglect, no cruelty can shake, and whose love is strong as death.

"Thou shouldst remain with me, Maria," observed the Duke, "but our army marches upon Naples to-morrow, therefore I must perforce send thee away."

Maria trembled and gasped for breath; she knew not how to commence her prayer, or disclose the great object of her visit.

"March for Naples to-morrow, Durazzo? kind Heaven forbid!"

" And wherefore ' forbid ? ' thou shouldst not rejoice that our labours are drawing close, that the goal is at hand, and that the perian apples are almost within my grasp.

" Alas ! Durazzo, I cannot contemplate the invasion of this country by a barbarous enemy in the same light as thou dost :—thy desertion of the Queen—nay, do not frown on me ; I will not argue the question no more. Yet I have a prayer to make before thou dost quit Benevento, and it is for this I have travelled weary and sore, that I have ventured through a camp of soldiery. The past cannot be recalled, but the future will never betray thee ; but we are still masters of our future actions. Durazzo, there is a God beyond that blue vault which now extends over us ! His eye is on thee, and me, and the millions of countless beings around ! "

She paused—there was a solemnity in her manner, and an earnestness in her lifted countenance, that awed even the dark spirit of the unbelieving Durazzo.

“ He can forgive all crimes, nor are thine or mine beyond the pale of mercy : but continuance in guilt, sooner or later, will rouse the lightnings of his wrath. Oh ! then, Durazzo, my dear husband ! stay thy course—it is not yet too late. Reflect on the great wrong thou dost to an innocent Queen, and the desolation and misery thou bringest upon thy country.”

Durazzo began to evince extreme impatience, and half thrust his wife from him.

“ Thy counsels have weight with the Hungarian King ; I ask thee not to betray the real assassins of his brother Andrea, but thou canst assure him that my sister is innocent, and therefore, since he comes to punish the guilty, Joanna and her husband must not be the objects of his vengeance ; prevent him, also, from continuing this dreadful slaughter of an unoffending people ; from pillaging and burning towns. Oh ! do this, and an approving conscience will reward thee ! and I—I will bless thee to my latest hour !”

Durazzo leant back in his chair, and burst into bitter laughter.

"What! woman, have I put my hand to the plough only to turn back? have I mounted the last step of the ladder of my glorious life, and shall I ignominiously descend? the crown is within my grasp and thine; I will conquer Naples first, and then I will overcome—" he suddenly dropped his voice, and stooped forward, "overcome the royal robber of Hungary. I will show mercy to the woman Joanna, and the man Louis? no, by the fiends whom I abhor more than I loathe them, no"—I tell thee, not the lives of all the men in Naples, not the safety of my country, not the powers above, nor hell beneath, shall shake my resolve, or turn me from my purpose!"

Maria shuddered at the fearful asseveration of that man of ambition and guilt; but, perceiving his determined mood, she utterly despaired of awakening in his bosom any sympathy for the sufferings of those whose cause she pleaded.

she felt that he was rushing headlong to his ruin, and involving herself in his crimes.

"Durazzo—my husband—I pray to thee, I adjure thee no more: I am thy poor passive slave again. May the time never arrive when thou wilt regret not having followed my humble advice!—Alas! I fear me, thy conscience will sleep no more, and mine—mine will pierce me with pangs for ever!"

She bowed her head down, and covered her face; but the convulsive heavings of her anguished bosom were visible through her close habit. The Duke calmly retired to the table, and resumed his calculations on the subject of the approaching attack upon Naples.

"Durazzo," faltered Maria after a short pause; "I will now leave thee, since my presence can be of no utility, and may only serve to disturb thee in thy military occupation."

"Stay!" exclaimed the Duke; "thou must needs be fatigued, and requirest food." He struck upon the table with the handle of his

dagger, and presently attendants appeared at his command, placed refreshments before her, but her spirit was too wrung, and her heart too sick, to allow her to partake of any thing.

While horsemen were making ready to accompany Maria back to her residence, she was again for a few moments alone with her husband.

"Thy journey has been a bootless, rash one;" observed the latter; "but God be true! I will chide thee not."

"When we meet again—"

"Thou wilt behold me a victor or a captive."

"And what, in either case, will become of me?"

"Thou shalt be a queen, or the widow of a man who fell in a glorious struggle for a country."

"Durazzo! Durazzo! I should be wretched whether raised to a throne, or cast down from it."

"Dismiss such thoughts; nerve thy heart to a farewell! and remember thy former promise."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ASSAULT.

Prepare you, generals ;
The enemy comes on in gallant show.

Shakspeare.

THE sun flashed over the Apennines; his slanting beam revealed floating plumes, and glittered on burnished helms, while the multitudinous points of spears sparkled as if the vast plain were suddenly converted into a sea of diamonds. "For Naples!" was the watchword through the Hungarian lines. The banners were unfurled, the trumpets woke the mountain echoes, and a hundred drums rolled their stirring music upon the air.

First came on, as on previous occasions, the mighty standard of sable, representing the

assassination of Prince Andrea, and he was surrounded as before by black-robed monks chanting and wailing the dirge of death. De la Roche led the van; Charles Artus, and Count Mincovich commanded the right and left wings; while the Hungarian Monarch himself headed a column of ten thousand heavy-armed horse, designed only on emergent occasions. In addition to this formidable array, clouds of Walachian soldiers and hardy mountaineers from beyond the Danube lured to the sunny south by the hope of plunder accompanied the Hungarians, and horse and foot near, were ready to scour the country, to pillage and to burn.

And thus the invading army, like an avalanche, or a black smooch of the sea, swept onwards. Fame and terror went before them. They styled themselves the avengers of the murdered Andrea; but all knew that their real design was but to subjugate and enslave the whole nation.

Arrogant from victories already gained

confident that no force which Queen Joanna could now send into the field, would dare to cope with his armed myriads, the King of Hungary advanced to within six miles of the Capital : the various troops then encamped, in order that they might rest and invigorate themselves previously to the grand attack, which, by placing the beautiful " City of the Bay" in the invader's power, would render him undisputed master of the entire kingdom.

* * * * *

The inhabitants of Naples, as well they might, were thrown into a state of fearful excitement. The terrible foe had at length arrived within a short distance of their gates, and the recent massacre at Benevento being fresh in the minds of the people, contributed not a little to enhance the general panic and dismay.

Nevertheless, a few brave men, among whom shone conspicuous Prince Louis and Walter Courtenay, succeeded in arousing the energy of the citizens. The spirit of loyalty was not

on its wings the faint blast of trumpets, and the roll of countless drums. These sounds betokened that the Hungarians were in motion. The music, and louder swelled the martial music, betokened the steady and gradual approach of the foe. There is no moment so fraught with excitement which raises impatience, perhaps terror, to a pitch of intensity, as that which precedes the meeting of men who are to join in mortal combat.

The long line of the enemy with their gleaming lances, and streaming banners, now appeared on the heights above the City. The heavy or foot soldiers, in iron caps and shirts of mail presented a wall of steel: the flying cavalry, the Carpathian hulk; the barbed steeds, the stalwart forms of Durazzo's men-at-arms; the wide-extended wings composed of half-mountaineers, and wanderers from the wilds of Croatia, led on by Artus and Count Muni, exhibited a spectacle that might well daunt and appall the burghers of Naples.

The Hungarian armament still pressed

wards; and now they had nearly descended the hill of St. Elmo, covering with their black multitude the beautiful scene, like locusts, in the oriental story, settling upon a paradise of fruits and flowers.

"They come!" was whispered from the walls; and hearts beat wildly; and many a prayer was addressed to Heaven for assistance in that hour of need.

The advancing foes halted, and presently from their van a man on a white charger dashed forwards; he was arrayed in a gorgeous tabard; his horse's velvet trappings swept the ground, and a richly embroidered banner was borne before him: these and other insignia denoted him to be a Herald: in conformity with the custom of the time, he sounded his trumpet, and thus summoned the City to surrender:

"Whereas the great and illustrious Monarch of Hungary, under favour of God, hath entered this kingdom of Naples to punish the murderers of his late beloved brother, Prince Andrea; which

murderers he can prove to be the woman and the lord Louis of Taranto; the same commands and entreats you, good citizens of Naples, to dethrone the same, and deliver the prisoners of State into his hands, to the judgment, befitting their crime, may be upon them. Moreover the Monarch of Hungary on grounds which he hath already published to the world, claims himself the crown and of this kingdom; therefore, citizens! lay down your arms, throw open your gates, and receive your lawful sovereign like discreet and dutiful subjects."

Another flourish of trumpets followed the conclusion of the Herald's speech; the insolence of the address so exasperated Louis, that, had not the person of a herald been sacred, he would have commanded his attendants to have shot the miscreant, without rendering any reply. Nevertheless, he returned an answer to the Hungarian Monarch, couched in language moderate as his dignity and outraged

would permit. His response set forth that the Queen and himself, being entirely innocent of the great crime urged against them, considered the King of Hungary an aggressor, and a robber. Joanna was the lawful possessor of the throne of Naples, and, by God's assistance, she would maintain the same. The citizens would not lay down their arms, and they dared the trans-Alpine tyrant to do his worst.

Shouts ran along the walls, and were responded to by the various towers, when the Neapolitan Pursuivant had delivered the above answer.

"Then Heaven have mercy on your souls! and remember Benevento!" cried the Hungarian Herald, as he wheeled around his charger, and galloped back to the main army.

"Remember Benevento!" these words blanched many a cheek, and chilled the blood of many a stout burgher as he stood by his catapult on the wall. Must they share the doom of that ill-fated city? must they yield to a foreign tyrant, or resist and die? such were the questions that

suggested themselves to numberless leaders, but these thoughts were speedily put to flight by the preparations which the Hungarians were making for a general assault.

It formed no part of Durazzo's policy to storm the City, and carry on a protracted siege; an attack, therefore, with the consent of the Emperor, was to be immediate; and orders were issued that when the place should have been reached, the soldiers might burn, slaughter, and do as their inclinations prompted them.

The Monarch and Durazzo disposed their troops nearly in the following manner:—The Walachian archers, and the wild mountaineers from the Carpathian hills, were, as a "first hope," first to rush on; their very bodies filling up the trenches which the Neapolitans had formed beneath the walls, would be of service; the more disciplined troops appointed to push the battering rams were to be borne forward by the most athletic Hungarians; and immediately a practicable breach should have been

Durazzo himself, at the head of his dismounted men-at-arms, would, sword in hand, rush through, and plant the Hungarian banner within the City.

All was prepared.—The Mountaineers, and every Walachians, like beasts of prey, bounded forwards: their wild yells rang over St. Elmo, and the Vomero mountains; and the fisherman, far seaward, rose in his bark, casting his affrighted eyes towards the devoted City, half deeming, in the fanaticism of his spirit, that fiends had been let loose from the regions below, to punish the inhabitants for their crimes.

Up their scaling-ladders sprang the active barbarians, brandishing their pole-axes, and swords. How did the subjects of Queen Joanna do their devoir under the furious attack?—Louis was among them, and the English Captain; their commands, their shouts, their gestures, the very flashing of their eyes, forbade the burghers to be wavens. Courtenay and Louis were the animating spirits along the beleaguered wall; where their swords fell, where their war-cry rang,

down over the battlements toppled vast numbers of
Mountaineers—man on man, howling in
agony, and rolling into the trench below.

The first rush was over; the "forlorn hope" of
the Hungarians had effected nothing but the
filling of the deep ditch with their slain
bodies.

On swung the battering engines, and
the shoulders of Hungarians cased in steel
men bearing above their heads wide
iron, neither molten lead, nor huge stones
from the ramparts, could prevent their
The strokes thundered—the walls shook—
came a buttress, then a tower—a breach
made! the Hungarians uttered exulting
and Durazzo, waving his sword, rushed
his men-at-arms, and instantly plunged
gaping aperture.

Now was to be the struggle—would
Hungary prevail!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WATCHERS.

*"She watched the fight, she saw his banner fly,
Fear on her brow, her soul within her eye."*

QUEEN Joanna, having proceeded with her chief men through the principal streets, and along the fortifications, cheering and animating her subjects to defend their rights, their liberties, and their homes, mounted to the summit of the royal palace ; from which spot she could plainly behold the assailants and the assailed, and watch the progress of the strife along the northern walls.

Joanna bent over the stone battlements with eager straining eyes ; and as the citizens advanced, or the enemy appeared to gain ground, so her brow was flushed, or her cheek grew pale.

She prayed for success ; yet more ardent
her supplications arise for the safety
husband : for oh ! what unto her would
tury or a throne, were Louis to fall ?

" And what seest thou now, Amalia
Joanna, as she threw back the masses
hair which clustered over her feverish

" The Saints have mercy upon us !
parts fall before their engines. See !
the standard of Durazzo !"

" Ha ! of my traitorous brother-in-
is ' it is ! his men-at-arms sweep ev
before them :—Amalia, we are lost !"

" And there is Durazzo himself, I know
by his black armour."

" Oh ! Heaven save our city in this
mity ! but whose banner is that, Amalia
now advances, wavers, and rises in the
struggle !"

" It is half covered with blood, but I
ceive a portion of its azure ground, and
of gold."

“ Yes, it is the banner of my noble husband—
God speed thy arm, Louis! God protect thee!—
I can see him now, Amalia; I know those white
plumes, for I fixed them with my own hand in
his helmet this morning. Look! he rushes on—
the sun is flashing upon his lifted sword—he has
met Durazzo himself in the midst of the breach.
Hark! how the soldiers shout! is Louis victor?
no, no, he gives way! he is borne backwards!
the Duke’s dastardly followers overpower him—
he falls—he sinks into the arms of the citizens,
—merciful God!”

Joanna clung to the battlements—a spasm of
agony convulsed her frame, and deprived her of
further utterance. Amalia hurried to her side,
and supported her. She directed her attention
to the scene of action, and desired her to watch
the struggle now, for the English Adventurers,
ever distinguishable by their massy plate armour,
and the colour of their mantles, were pouring
into the breach, and with irresistible fury, beat-
ing back the Hungarians.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FLIGHT.

The sun of Rome is set, our day is gone !
 Clouds, dew, and dangers come ; our deeds are done.

Ja

Where was thy ancient spirit fled, Part
 thou " circling city of the Bay !" when
 tus christened thee Neapolis, thou wert
 the seat of luxury, but not of a dark
 prostrating bigotry. What cities of
 hallowed by the memories of the past
 and thee ? why are thy sons no longer
 it is because they bend beneath the yoke
 most abject and slavish superstition : it
 they dare not, like other nations of

* The ancient name of Naples.

Europe, think for themselves. Popery is the iron chain which binds them to the soil—the thick darkness that beclouds their spiritual vision; and so long as knees bend to Saints and the Virgin Mary, instead of one Almighty, eternal, and omniscient God, so long will they continue incapable of physical energy, or mental greatness.

Night, we have stated, occasioned a brief cessation of hostilities; the strife which had been maintained during the past day, proved sufficient for the mass of the Neapolitans; while removing their dead from the walls, and while listening to the lamentations of bereaved children, or widowed mothers, all their patriotic spirit vanished. Better be bondmen, they cried, to the Hungarian King, than to perish like the martyrs of the provincial towns. Better for one to fall or die in the person of their Queen, than for destruction to overtake the whole community. "Remember Benevento!" these were the ominous words

that circulated from mouth to mouth, and through their souls.

In vain Louis and Courtenay, perceiving the terrible panic which had seized the people, rushed in among the pale and trembling multitude; in vain they expostulated, threatened, and entreated; Queen Joanna, likewise, appeared, hoping that her presence might induce her passionate subjects to return to their duty; but all was proved abortive; the regular troops, the burghers, threw down their arms, and abandoned their posts. Still the cry was, *Not die! we care not what masters we have, so long as we be permitted to live*—remember Brabant!

Amidst this tumult and general confusion, the chief citizens and magistrates, convened in a meeting in the Market-Place; and a resolution was unanimously embraced to beseech the Queen and her Court to fly immediately from the city, while they, with the dawn of light, would send a deputation to the Hungarian monarch, to offer themselves submissive, and deliver up the

hands the keys of their city. This measure, they trusted, would soothe the irascible king, and avert from them the fate which had attended the loyal towns in the north.

Meantime, all the barons and captains who would not desert the royal cause, rallied around Castel-Nuovo. Louis and the Queen invited them to a conference in the great hall of the building. But what measures could they adopt, calculated to save their country from the doom which awaited it? theirs was patriotism without hope—valour burning through the night of despair. Louis and Courtenay proposed dying sword in hand, and the Barons seconded their resolution. They would never bend the knee to the maligner of their Queen; they would never submit to the yoke of a foreign tyrant.

"Thanks to ye, gallant and brave men!" said Joanna from the chair of estate in which she sat. "I appreciate your valour, and am grateful to ye for your loyalty to myself and husband; the more especially since the greater number of our

subjects appear to have deserted us in
of need. But I will not be the cause
bloodshed, enough lives have been sac-
this unhappy struggle. God hath per-
Hungarian monarch so far to triumph
hours, and the chains of his tyranny
over prostrate Naples. It is my intent
follow the advice of the civic rulers, to
the pressure of circumstances, and to
city which we may no longer defend."

A hundred swords glanced from their
at these words, and, as one man, the B
claimed; "we will never turn our ba
will defend our Queen to the death!"

"Then with prayers, and tears, I b
to listen to my counsel. I am desirous
myself innocent of the heinous crime w
I am charged, not only to the people o
but to Europe at large. Let us then,
subjects, without loss of time, embar
gallies now lying in the Bay. We w
to Avignon, where the chair of St. Pet

planted, and before the Pope and his Cardinals, my husband and myself will plead our cause. Then, if we be pronounced guiltless, we will rouse the chivalric spirit of France, or appeal to the generous sympathies of England, to redress our wrongs.—What say ye? will ye follow your Prince and Queen?”

The barons and knights hastily conferred together; though their natural inclinations prompted them to remain, and dispute the City with the enemy to the last, yet they could not but acknowledge the policy of the plan as proposed by Queen Joanna; and they doubted not that, by embracing her counsel, they should render greater service to the royal cause, than if they remained and perished in Naples. The nobles and captains, then, bent before her chair of estate, expressed their concurrence with her views, and declared themselves ready to follow their Queen, and Prince Louis, to the Papal Court at Avignon.

* * * * *

There was a great hurrying by to along the Mole of Naples. The galleys, hastily provisioned and manned, for it was necessary that the royal party should put off before the morning dawned. Barons, wealthy mailed followers, stalked along, clenching hands, and casting glances of wrath in the direction of the enemy's camp. Timid women, veiled in their mantillas, walked with trembling steps, fearful that the Hungarians might surprise them, and intercept their flight. The Queen, her immediate court, and faithful followers, amounted to nearly a thousand souls, these hurried on board the galleys, which, under cover of the night, swept unchallenged, and unperceived out of the Bay.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CONQUEROR.

"The tyrant's peace was fearful ; fatal guile
Entombed the slaves who trusted to his smile,"

Croly.

GREAT was the rage that swelled the breast of the Hungarian King, when intelligence reached the camp that the Queen and her court had effected their escape during the night. He wished to have made Joanna and Louis prisoners, and to have poured upon them personally those reproaches, and to have treated them with that scorn, which he considered they merited. Thus his vengeful nature was deprived of half the pleasure which he had anticipated in the storming and capture of Naples. His first impulse was to pursue them over the sea ; but

the fact that only a few fishermen's boats were at his disposal, while the royal parties already proceeded several leagues on their voyage, convinced him that such an attempt would be utterly unavailing; he therefore smothered his wrath, and consoled himself beneath his disappointment, as well as he was able.

Under the circumstances which had transpired, it was no matter of surprise that, at breakfast-day, the royal banners which lately streamed from every tower and turret, had all disappeared; that burghers, with cross-bow and spear, no longer manned the walls, and that the pale terror, and the silence of submission, reigned in the recently excited City. Durazzo and the king were not a little gratified at the aspect of affairs, and yet they secretly wished that further resistance had been made, in order that a colour of justice might have been given to their sanguinary views.

While they were consulting together on the best steps to be adopted, it was announced

a deputation from the City of Naples had arrived at the camp, and craved an audience of the Hungarian King. Permission was granted the burghers to advance to the royal tent, and some twenty of the chief citizens, heads of the *Seggi* of Naples, arrayed in their gowns of office, entered the presence. The oldest man of the party, having been appointed spokesman, dropped on one knee before the Monarch, who did not deign to rise from his seat. The citizen's left hand, in token of fealty, was placed on his breast, and in his right he held the keys of the principal gates.

"Monarch of Hungary!" he began in a tremulous voice; "we are commissioned to approach thy footstool, with a view to unfold the sentiments of the loyal city of Naples."

"Loyal to ourselves, dost thou mean to assert?"

"Yea, unto thee, august Potentate."

"Thou liest, slave!"

"We trust that your Majesty will find your servants men of truth;" continued the old man

trembling violently; " we tender our submission and here at your royal feet, lay the keys of the repentant City."

" Neapolitans ! dogs ! traitors ! ye tender submission and your keys, because, in sooth, ye dare not withhold them ; think ye we receive such as gifts ? no.—By the Saints ! ye are rebels now brought upon knees, and crying for mercy !—My lord of Razzo, dost thou deem that Naples deserves our hands a milder doom than that knave of torous dogs—Benevento ?"

" Scarcely milder, sire !" replied the Duke.

" Hoary citizen, answer us—didst thou, during the assault of yesterday, aid by thy counsel thy arm, the woman Joanna ?"

The good and conscientious burgher, scorned to utter a direct falsehood, remained silent.

" Ahn ! knave ! guilty art thou !—again ; didst thou suffer the harlot and her paramour to flee during the night, and so elude our

ment, and the punishment we had prepared for them?"

"August Monarch! without denying thy claim to the government of Naples; without insisting upon the innocence of the Prince and Queen, we confess we had compassion upon their extreme youth."

"Then *we*, at least, shall not have compassion on thy *extreme* old age—ha! ha!—guards! take that hoary-headed traitor forth, and hang him to the nearest tree. By St. Paul! we shall have to dispatch a few more such reptiles, ere we thoroughly purify this new city of ours."

A fiendish smile passed over the tyrant's countenance; but he soon re-assumed the stern gravity, and fanatic gloom, which habitually shadowed his spirit.

While the cruel sentence on the poor citizen was carrying into execution, the remaining individuals who composed the deputation, continued in a state of suspense and terror not easily to be described: but the Bishop of Waradin, who

sat by the king's side, whispered into his ear, and whatever the far-sighted and politic counsellors' advice might have been, the former refused to give way to his opinion, for he immediately addressed the trembling Neapolitans in a manner for him extraordinarily complaisant :

“ Citizens! fear not touching your own property, nor mourn ye for your brother : we hang the traitor on the gallows, inasmuch as example has ever a salutary effect. We are come to this land not with a rod of iron, but to sit on a sceptre in mercy and love. We accept of your submission, and the keys of Naples as your rightful heritage.—Citizens, depart in peace.”

In the space of an hour from that time the Hungarian army began to pour its living stream through the Capuan gate, which had been thrown open for the reception of the conqueror. Although the King, at the instance of the Count Robert, had countermanded the order previously given, that had empowered the soldiery to pillage and plunder as they might feel inclined,

from the wild and barbarous character of a large portion of the troops, slaughter and pillage could not altogether be prevented.—The avaricious ransacked the houses for gold; the worshippers of Bacchus broke into all the wine-cellars; and the licentious seized on every sunny beauty, exalted or humble, maid or wife, which in the wide City they could find. Indeed, no little exertion was requisite on the part of the Hungarian Sovereign, and his officers, and no short time elapsed, before order and tranquillity were restored to the captured City.

The King, Durazzo, and Robert, held a consultation in the halls of Castel-Nuovo, where so recently Joanna and her unfortunate followers had assembled. The royal Hungarian, having expended his wrath in the decapitation of several of the chief civic functionaries who had been suspected of favouring the cause of the exiled Queen, seemed now peculiarly desirous of ingratiating himself with his new subjects; and it was proposed among other measures, such as

the reduction of duties on merchandize, and scattering of coin among the crowd, that Robert on a certain day, should deliver a public oration, and, by his eloquence, endeavour to convince the people of the equity of their Monarch's proceedings, of the guilt of their late Queen, and to impress upon them the advantages which every class of society would derive from the new government.

Accordingly a rostrum, or pulpit, was hastily erected in the great Square, the people were called together by trumpeters, who, followed by a long train of priests, proceeded through the principal streets. The Bishop of Waradin was received with shouts of applause, and numerous genuflections. He was arrayed in his episcopal habit; his lofty mitre glittered with precious stones, and his lawn sleeves were of unusual amplitude. With a stately and noble step, Robert ascended the pulpit; two of the chief ecclesiastical dignitaries in Naples occupied stations beneath: in front, several youths in snow-white vestments, swung to and fro cen-

of burning perfumes; while at the foot of the rostrum, Forester, richly apparelled, held his baton of office in his hand.

The people, awed by the renown of the extraordinary man before them,—renown little short of that which is attached to a saint, were all silence and attention; ay, in that vast multitude, a word, a murmur, a sigh might have been heard. At length, extending his arms, the Bishop of Waradin commenced his celebrated oration.

We do not design to chronicle an harangue, the delivery of which extended over a space of some four hours. Suffice it to say that the powers of Robert's oratory were chiefly directed to the defence of the measures pursued by the Hungarian King, whose character for mercy and justice, he painted in high and glowing colours. His anathemas on the absent Queen, and her consort Louis, were of a terrific nature; and dwelling on the atrocity of their crime, and the foulness of a marriage cemented by blood, he presented them as little better than fiends incarnate.

The Prelate's discourse, indeed, was followed by applause, but such as the fickle crowd ever bestow on the present lord of the scene. The people retired apparently well satisfied; but it must be remembered that a large body of citizens really believed Joanna and Louis guilty of the crimes attributed to them. The Hungarian King, on the succeeding day, to please and dazzle a populace, proverbially fond of pageantry and show, was drawn in a triumphal chariot through the streets; he bestowed money on the needy, and conciliated the rich by a magnificent deportment.

Thus, in a short space, the aggressor triumphed, and vice and hypocrisy, amid magnificence and power, mocked at destitute virtue and suffering innocence.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VOYAGE.

Clouds on his brow, and lightnings round his form,
 Bursts on the scene the Spirit of the Storm ;
 Terror, sublimity, are in his train ;
 He shakes the hills, and walks the raging main.

MS.

We must go back for a short period, and resume our narrative on the night of Joanna's departure from the Mole of Naples, for it is our intention to follow the Queen on her voyage to France, where, before Pope Clement and his Cardinals, she had resolved on behalf of herself and husband to solicit a trial.

The little fleet numbered only eight gallies ; the largest vessel was appropriated to Louis, the Queen, and her immediate suite ; the English Captain, and about a hundred of his Adventurers, were in a Venetian galliot ; and the re-

remaining barks contained the High Constable of Naples, Boccaccio, Nicola Acciajuoli, together with several Neapolitan barons, and their retainers.

They had reached the island of Ischia the morning purpled the east. They could distinguish the watch-fires of the enemy on the neighboring hills, and, beneath the faint shimmer of the moon, lay Naples, and her beautiful suburbs; but shortly doubling the promontory of Miseno, the fairy City of the Bay, palace after palace, tower after tower, had melted from their view as swiftly as sail could waft, or oar could urge, and they ploughed the waste of waters. The virgins felt themselves wanderers and exiles; they were fleeing from a savage foe; they had striven for freedom, although in vain; yet while they gazed in gloomy indignation at the necessity which urged the measure they had embraced, one feeling, like an electric chain, pervaded and bound all their hearts—and that feeling was devotion to their Queen.

The sun sprang up, and laughed on the green hills far away, and over the glittering sea. Beneath an awning on the deck of the royal galley, stood Joanna, Amalia, and Prince Louis. The Queen's old attendant and confidant, the Countess Philippa, was not there; her hoary head, her secret, and her crimes, were now shrouded in the grave. The three cast their eyes in the direction of Naples, although they beheld their lost and beloved city no more. They remained silent, wrapped in thought; but the reflections in which the one indulged, were almost of an opposite character from the meditations of the other, receiving their distinctive peculiarities from the bias and temperament of their minds. Louis was contemplating the possibility of revenging himself on the tyrant of Hungary, and, with the chivalry of France, of driving him from the kingdom he had usurped. Joanna thought of the treachery of those who had deserted her in the hour of extremity; and of her sister Maria, for whom she entertained a sincere affection, although

united to her bitterest and most implacable enemy. Then her heart thrilled with anguish as she reflected on the dreadful crime, with which Durazzo and the Hungarian King laid to charge of herself and husband. Amalia sat apart, resting against the side of the gilded gorgeous vessel. She thought not of her situation, or indulged her personal sorrow. Commiseration for the misfortunes of Joanna and Louis, was the predominant feeling in her young and sensitive bosom. Her eyes at times were raised from the waters, but whether they wandered towards the delightful shores she was leaving, or rested upon the galliot in the which bore Walter Courtenay and his venturers, we do not in this place pretend to determine.

"Why dost thou wear so dejected a countenance, Louis?" said the Queen to her husband.
"Thou art injured, wrongfully accused, driven from thy country; yet one still is not one who, however others betray, will

prove false—never desert thee. Oh! let thy wife's love, then, yield thee amidst thy misfortunes some consolation."

She took the hand of the exiled Prince, but he remained in mournful abstraction, and the dark thoughts which stirred within him, gave an unwonted sternness to his noble visage.

"Why is this, Louis? thou dost not hear me, or surely thou wouldst not pierce my heart with another pang. My husband! my dear lord! speak to me—does any new sorrow afflict thy mind?"

"Old sorrows are sufficient without the addition of new ones:" replied Louis, grasping the hilt of his sword. "Would that I had remained in Naples, to plunge this into the usurper's heart!"

"And so fall, and leave me without a protector—alone in the world!--alas! Louis, thou canst love me but little, if, to gratify a feeling of revenge, thou wouldst cloud all my hopes of a brighter future, and quit my side for ever."

"Thou dost misinterpret my words," Louis, "by the Heaven above us! thou wrong my affection. No, for thee, dear Anna, I would live; for thee I would entertain belief of ultimate and triumphant success over our dastardly foes!"

"And this is the spirit I would wish to preserve;" said the Queen: "without stoicism, or possessing callousness of heart, may bear the burden which fickle fortune upon us with patience, and bow in submission to the decrees of the Ruler of human destiny. Exiles as we are, how far less wretched a lot than that of thousands in this barren world! others are banished for real crimes, are the prey of an upbraiding conscience; we stand in the sweet sunshine of conscience, while the hope remains that as our innocence is proved before the high throne of the Roman Pontiff, the powers of Europe espouse our cause, and re-instate us in our kingdom."

Such were the words by which Joanna endeavoured to soothe the chafing spirit of her brave but impatient husband. In a few days they arrived off the shores of Tuscany, and it was resolved that Louis, and his friend Acciajuoli, should land, and proceed direct to Florence. That republic was avowedly inimical to the Hungarian party, and Louis wished to obtain, as an adviser and advocate, the celebrated Bishop of Florence, a man of great talent, and who possessed considerable interest at the Papal Court. He likewise intended to secure the services of Baldus, and Angelus of Perugia, the most renowned lawyers of the day.

Joanna and her husband bade each other an anxious farewell. They would not meet again until each party arrived at Avignon, the seat, at that time, of the Papal See. The gallies with the Queen again put off from the Tuscan shores, and followed by the good wishes and prayers of the inhabitants, Joanna continued her voyage, coasting around the gulf of Genoa to Provence.

The little fleet was now under the command of the High Constable of Naples, who had been appointed to Louis's place in the galley. Tempted by the appearance of the weather, and in order to avoid a circuitous route, the Constable stood further out to sea than was usual with the timid navigators of those days.

On the one hand the voyagers could just discern the Corsican shore, and on the other the snowy hills of Piedmont melted into the horizon.

The sky was serene, and the smooth sea reflected on their transparent bosom the forms of the barks that stooped along, like dancing flames on the deep. All, as far as it went, enjoyed themselves, and, charmed by the beauty of the scene, forgot for a few hours their sorrows and misfortunes. The blue extended canopy of heaven, the soft murmur of the gull, mingling with sweet Italian songs, exalted their thoughts, and fascinated their senses.

One only in the royal galley experienced uneasiness, and surveyed the surrounding prospect with dissatisfaction and mistrust; it was the veteran Camillo. Louis, on proceeding to Florence, had left his worthy Squire in the train of the Queen, and in spite of his aversion to women in general, the Roman felt inclined to tolerate, and even panegyrisé the persons of Joanna and Amalia.

Camillo bent over the side of the galley; his cloak, fashioned like the ancient Roman Toga, was of an unusual size, part of which, for convenience, was thrown over his right shoulder. He watched the sea-birds, as they wheeled, in eccentric circles, around the masts, and then, with shrill cries, swept away for the shores of Provence. From time to time he applied his ear to the gunwale of the vessel, and shook his head like a man who is convinced that he knows more than his neighbours.

The Constable, who was walking up and down with the Queen and Amalia, struck by his singular gestures, put to him sundry questions.

"Great Constable of Naples;" replied Camillo; "I see and hear certain things, though they do not alarm me, inform my experience that this calm weather will be of short duration. Nevertheless, I do not anticipate such a storm as that described by Virgil in the opening of his immortal *Eneid*."

The Constable and Joanna smiled at the pedantry of the ex-schoolmaster.

"Nay, honoured Constable, thou mayest be mirthful with thy servant, but by Neptune or *Æolus*, my words will be verified. I remember once when our crater at Naples was as calm as this glassy ocean, but in one hour it boiled like the river *Phlegethon* that surrounds *Tartarus*. Then with my right arm did I save a curly-headed boy, even my master, the Prince of Tarentum, now King of Naples."

"Thou didst! thou didst!" cried Joanna; "proceed, worthy Camillo; we will believe thee, thou dost affirm."

"Standing erect as ye do now;" observed

Roman; "ye hear no sound; but stoop your heads on the gunwale thus, and a low murmur will meet your ears, like that in the ocean shell, wherein, poets say, dwell nymphs of the deep."

They complied with Camillo's request, and imagined they heard the sound to which he alluded.

"Great must be the tumult of waves on the Corsican shore;" continued Camillo; "or the billows would not send to this distance vibrations of air, which striking against the sides of the vessel, mount to our ears. The storm must already have commenced there: I like not either these long glassy waves over which we are beginning to roll; and see, honoured Constable, those clouds gathering in the south!—the vane, also, on the mast, points by turns to every quarter of the Heaven."

The venerable Noble and the Queen perceived the truth of Camillo's remarks; yet they did not consider that any cause for alarm existed, for even should the wind blow strong, in a few hours they could reach Nice.

"Hark!" cried Camillo, "to those instruments of music! better the English Captain were tuning his guitar; but such are those barbarous islanders, valiant enough, but rash and imprudent.—By Neptune, what know they of Levanters and Siroccos?—Ho! Coast Naples! if thou wilt follow the advice of the sailors of these seas, thou wilt instantly reef thy sails."

Camillo's alarm was not given too early. Now at a short distance, a sudden breeze appeared on the waters. The sails were set, and the other gallees followed the example of their commander. On swept the blast, and on its wings clouds of foam. In an instant it reached the vessels, and bowed them to the sea; but, quickly regaining their position, they swept away before the gale towards the coast of Provence.

Fearful was the confusion which prevailed among the mariners, for the seamen of the coast were as timorous as they were unskilful.

long galley-oars were rendered almost useless by the violence of the swell, and the Constable repented, when too late, that he had steered his little fleet so far from the land.

On board the royal galley, the Queen and Amalia, although urged by the courtiers to repair to the cabin, would not quit the deck. Indeed Joanna evinced more presence of mind than many of their Italian sailors: the latter, with their accustomed superstition, instead of plying their oars, and keeping a look out for shoals and rocks, began to implore their tutelary saints. Here a Sicilian on his knees closed his eyes, and devoutly kissed an image of Santa Rosalia; there a Neapolitan resigned the management of his sail, to patter over his beads, and prostrate himself before a little *Agnus Dei*. But these recreants Camillo awoke with a thundering call, laying, at the same time, the handle of his javelin over their backs. The Constable intimated his approval of the Roman's conduct, and, as he considered him a skilful pilot, begged him to take the helm from the hand of the trembling Calabrian.

The progress of the royal galley, under the guidance of Camillo, was not more felicitous. The Roman, honest fellow as he might have been, was one of those individuals whose talents consist in talking, rather than performing; and his nautical skill of which he boasted, was in reality extremely small. The galley, from her small size, had gained considerably upon the other vessels, which followed, as well as they could, in her wake. As yet there was ample sea-room, and consequently, if the sailors performed their duty, little danger was to be apprehended.

"Amalia!" cried the Queen; "never be of a heavy heart, and be of good cheer. Fear not, despite the dashing of the spray. There, draw thy mantle more closely around thee; when we shall have landed at the good City of Nicoterra, amidst the buffeting of the saucy waves and winds, thou shalt have but a tale to tell of."

Amalia's anxious looks, and agitated manner, although her lips were mute, betrayed the apprehensions which she felt; she turned pale as now

snapped in twain, and now a rope gave way ; and at every roll of the labouring bark over the vexed billows, she pressed, as for protection, to the side of Joanna.

A report was now made that the galley had sprung a leak, and that the water was fast pouring in. Camillo called on the men to adopt the means usually resorted to on such occasions. " My lord Constable !" he exclaimed cheerfully, " alarm not yourself ; this wind, I assure you, is but a zephyr compared with the gales that I have stood the brunt of. You have done me honour by soliciting me to take the helm, and I hope I shall discharge the important duty to your satisfaction. This is not the first vessel I have rescued from the jaws of destruction."

The sailors worked with great diligence, but the water gained upon them ; and it was evident that the galley every minute rode deeper in the

Joanna, for the first time, felt the icy current of fear creep at her heart. She endeavoured to

descried the gallees in their wake ; but so rapid was the sea run, that she could only catch, at intervals, a glimpse of their masts ; hence occurred the certainty, that happen what might, the vessels were in a too perilous situation then to render them any assistance.

" Amalia !" she exclaimed, " it would in me longer to conceal my apprehensions, we are in imminent danger. Ay, more fearful than the enemies we have left on shore, are the winds which howl, and those billows which to yawn for our destruction. God be praised that Louis is not here ! he, at least, will not find a watery grave."

" Joanna !" cried the girl, her eyes turned to Heaven, and her hair floating in wild confusion on the wind ; " is there, then, no hope ? I see *thy* spirit sail, I may well conclude *thine* is lost.—Joanna, religion enjoins us not to shrink from death ; yet I cannot contemplate the dark unknown, the abyss of eternity, without a sudden

"I have heavier crimes to answer for than thou hast, dear girl; but let us pray together."

"Plead for me, my friend, my sister!" cried Amalia; and she clung in agony around Joanna's neck, but terror forbade her tears to flow.

"Be tranquil!" said the Queen; "we must not altogether abandon hope: God's mercy, I trust, will yet befriend us; but if it be his pleasure that we perish, we will at least die thus in each other's arms."

A loud crash caused them both to start; a sudden gust had shivered one of the masts, and it fell with its cumbersome sails upon the galley's deck.

"Ply your axes, my men, and overboard with it!" cried Camillo, calmly as if riding over the plains of Calabria beside his master. "Away with those images yonder! and, Sicilians! if ye stand longer pattering your rosaries, instead of baling out the water, by Jupiter! your beads and your crosses shall be tied around your necks, and ye shall be cast with them, Jonahs as ye are, into the deep!"

The royal galley now, in spite of Carr's boasted nautical alidity, was totally unmanageable; she rose on the mountain waves, and again dashed between their hollows, in a fearful manner; and it was only by clinging fast to ropes and bulwarks, that the crew were able to stand, or maintain their stations.

A signal of distress was hoisted, but either was unperceived by the rest of the fleet, or, if perceived, the royal galley, as Joanna's fears had already anticipated, had itself sufficient perils to combat with. Moreover, from the sudden shrieks which had swelled upon the gale, and died again suddenly, it was conjectured that one of the vessels had foundered; and the Constable thought it probable the ill-fated bark was that which carried the English Captain and his Adventurers, and which was the smallest.

Onward the disabled galley was borne along; her course was full upon the coast of Provence, as she was hurled upon the crest of the foaming billows, the mariners could faintly discern

spires of Nice. Their greatest danger now arose from rocks that lay off the coast, and which, from the ungovernable state of their vessel, it would be almost impossible to avoid.

" Sicilians ! keep a look out on the bow !" cried Camillo : " where is the Altossi ridge ? methinks we must be near it now, for, in my gondola, I have often rowed around it. If we succeed in passing between those rocks and the shore, we shall be safe."

" And if we do not—then Almighty God have mercy upon our souls !" ejaculated the agitated Constable.

It was a moment of dreadful expectation : they might pass beside the perilous rocks, or they might strike on them. Their fate in a few minutes would be decided. Many were buoyed by hope, a few were prepared for the worst, but all remained in a state of agonizing suspense.

Suddenly a voice proclaimed from the bow, half a call, half a shriek—" they are a-head ! they are a-head !" no time was allowed for pre-

paration ; they had scarcely a moment to breathe prayer ; for even while the seaman spoke, the galley, with a shock like thunder, dashed upon the ridge !

" O God ! our hour is come !" exclaimed Joanna, clasping Amalia in her arms ; " we will perish together ! life with its joys, and its woes must now be exchanged for eternity—*Adieu, adieu, farewell, farewell !*"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WRECK.

"He sleeps not in his native greenwood vale,
Where the sweet thrush tells her plaintive tale ;
But at the bottom of the mighty deep ;
Above his head the booming billows sweep ;
Their prey the ocean monsters will not spare ;
No sigh will soothe, no tear will reach him there."

THE vessel which had foundered prior to the wreck of the royal galley, was not that manne by the English Adventurers. Although the smallest, Courtenay's galliot was of the true "Venetian build," and the best adapted in the fleet for weathering a gale. Courtenay himself was an able seaman : during the brief intervals of leisure which his military career afforded, his delight had been to navigate the Mediterranean in his pleasure-bark ; and with the Gulf of

Genoa, and the shores of Provence, he was well acquainted : some of his followers, likewise, possessed a portion of that nautical ability which has distinguished their countrymen beyond every other nation of the globe. Courtenay stood himself at the helm ; the most athletic of the Englishmen bent to the oars ; Italians, however, tended the sails ; but their images, as soon as produced, were hurled overboard by the sacrilegious Briton. It is not surprising, then, that Courtenay's bark, although suffering from the violence of the tempest, remained unshattered, and perfectly manageable. It is true, from her inferior size, the galliot was unable to pass through the water as rapidly as the royal vessel ; but she rode over the billows like a cork ; and Courtenay, who had perceived the disastrous situation of the Queen and her crew, resolved, at every hazard, to render them assistance.

" By Heaven ! they are nearing the Altar ridge !" he cried, " and do not, or cannot make an effort to escape destruction."

"Camillo, that braggart Roman," exclaimed a bronzed veteran, "is at the helm; he might contrive, perhaps, to steer a gondola across a summer lake, but in a sea like this, Jacobo, my monkey, would perform the task better."

"My gallant men!" cried Courtenay, "there are individuals in yonder galley—individuals whose lives are worth empires; we must not, therefore, see them perish. Saints! do I behold aright? they have struck on the rocks! their vessel is going to pieces!"

And it was as he stated, for at this point of time, Queen Joanna had uttered the exclamation of despair which we have just recited. The Englishmen now merged every consideration as regarded the danger which menaced themselves, in the desperate resolution of saving the crew of the royal galley. It was evident that, dashed as she was by the waves against sharp rocks, the beautiful bark would soon be a complete wreck. Courtenay swept towards her until within a short distance of the perilous ridge;

when, dexterously veering, and keeping galliot's head to the wind, he cast anchor slowly running out his cable, and driving wards before the tempest, he approached wreck as near as circumstances would per-

It was a thrilling, a dreadful sight, to the anxious faces, and eager gesticulations devoted crew. The instinctive fear of dis- the tenacity with which the old as well young, the miserable as well as the cling to life, may well form a subject to the speculations of the curious analyzer human mind. Some wept and wrung hands ; others wildly shrieked ; and many wretches had already plunged into the hoping thereby to be the first on board U liot ; but these perished ; the boats, also, the Englishmen lowered from the side of vessel, were instantly ingulphed by the ~~breakers~~.

One method only appeared likely to s in saving the Queen's crew ; it was that

veying ropes from one bark to the other, and so sliding, or drawing the parties over. After considerable pains, Courtenay succeeded in gaining a rope from the wreck, and which he attached to the stern of the galliot; another quickly followed, and thus a rude ladder was formed. The first to spring over this, and gain the shattered bark, was the English Captain. The grand object of rescue of course was the Queen. Waiving every consideration but that of the peril of the hour, Courtenay bade Joanna be of good heart, and took her in his arms, as though she had been an infant. Throwing himself upon the ropes, he placed her before him, so that she might receive no injury; and thus, another cord being attached to his body, he was drawn over by his comrades.

Shouts of joy arose, as soon as the Queen was in safety; but Joanna had no time to thank her gallant preserver, for he was again in the wreck. Another there, even more prized, and to his heart more dear, demanded his assistance. He

knelt, and prayed Annalia to forgive him;—then gently raised her in his arms.—(O what were his sensations, thus holding all he loved in his heart! should he ever again clasp her in his arms! should he ever again feel her breath on his cheek! as he passed over the wreck!) Annalia leaning on his shoulder, so overpowered was he by the rush of his impassioned feelings, that he almost forgot his perilous situation, and that he hung on the brink of eternity.

The example of Courtenay was followed by his brave Adventurers, in saving the honour, and other ladies attached to Courtenay; and many a soldier held in his arms, as lovely a damsel as his rough heart could desire.

The female portion of the royal party, having been thus rescued, the Italian nobles and gentlemen crowded the ropes, flinging themselves overboard, as they might. Courtenay, however, felt that respecting the High Constable, who on account of his advanced age, might not be so

active to pass along the line; and accordingly he bore him in his arms, in the same manner as he had carried the Queen.

"Viva! noble Captain!" shouted honest Camillo; "thou art worthy to be immortalized by another Virgil; for so did his hero Æneas transport his father from the flames of Troy."

The rapture of the individuals saved, venting itself in gesticulation rather than in words, may not be described. Some were locked in mutual embraces; many wept like children; but still the Italian seamen kissed their saints, and passed them from one to the other, esteeming them the sole objects of their gratitude. "Praised be San Gennaro, and San Antonio!" they cried; "they have done this! they have saved us! glory to the Virgin and to them!"

So crowded by this time was the little galley, that, without endangering the lives of the whole, no more persons could be received from the wreck. It was a heart-rending alternative, that of leaving the remainder to perish; but ne-

cessity urged; and the Grand Seneschal Baux, acting more decisively than the others, cut the ropes in twain with his sword, and communication between the vessels was at an end.

The anchor was raised: the men started their oars, and the galliot, sheering to the right, passed gallantly around the fearful rock. The English veteran had taken the helm, under the supposition that his master had mingled with the company in immediate attendance upon the Queen; they had proceeded, however, a short distance, when a cry was raised that the English Captain was not in the galley! The sternation which ensued was highly creditable to the humanity, and strongly expressive of the sense of gratitude which pervaded the breasts of those who had been rescued from destruction. Joanna's distress bordered on agony; and Isabella felt even more, although she did not utter a word to her anguish.

"Yes," cried the Queen, "I perceive

reason of his absence—he intended to have been the last on board the wreck; he would see all rescued before he would save himself; thus too hastily De Baux divided the ropes, and left him there to perish.”

“It is even so;” said the High Constable; “and the generous man would not hail us back, lest he should endanger our safety.”

“Why do we waste a moment?” continued the Queen; “Oh, let us return to the rocks!”

The Adventurers, furious at the error which had been committed, instantly rowed the galliot around, and strove to make head against the wind; but such was the swell of the sea, and the force of the tempest against them, that they were unable to effect the slightest progress. A figure now appeared on the stern of the wreck, waving to them, as if he wished they would relinquish their design, and continue their course to the shore: it was the self-sacrificed English Captain: at the sight of their leader some of the Adventurers sprang up, and, in their eagerness to save him, if they had not been prevented,

would have thrown themselves into the sea. Another effort was made; three laboured at the oar; but this proved equally unavailing. After the other, the oar-blades snapped. Despairing of success, and being threatened with imminent danger, nature and justice called upon them to submit, and abandoned gallant Courtenay to his fate.

With heavy hearts, they made for the Queen in speechless distress, and Amanda, through streaming tears, towards the fast-sinking vessel, until it was lost in surrounding foam.

They arrived at the Port, and were followed by the five remaining galleys of the fleet. The first act of Joanna was to send life-boats, which being small, and covered with leather, might live amidst the tempest. The Adventurers manned these boats, and fled for the Altossi rocks, while the Queen's Court proceeded to the Cathedral, to return thanks to Almighty God for their miraculous preservation, and to supplicate for the safety of the devoted Englishman.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ABANDONED.

"Lashed into foam the fierce conflicting brine
Seems o'er a thousand raging waves to burn.
Ill fares the bark with trembling wretches charged."

Thomson.

THE stern of the wrecked galley still held together, and there, were gathered the unfortunate beings, about twenty in number, who, unless assistance were promptly rendered them, would inevitably perish. The sharp rocks on which the vessel had struck, rose like pinnacles from the waves; but the sea broke over them with such fury, that there appeared no possibility of a human being maintaining a footing. Nevertheless, some ventured to spring upon the rocks,

hoping thereby to gain a place of greater security than the stern of the galley, which was being torn every minute to fall to pieces. First, the men grasped the naked flints, and wound them around each jutting point. At one time the rocks were completely buried beneath mountains of ice, and now they appeared again, remaining long enough to gather breath for another assault. This could not continue; they were exhausted; one by one relaxed his hold, and his upward-streaming hair and lifted body showed the last, was borne away to the depths.

Eight individuals only remained. The movement of the vessel whereon they stood was dashed by every billow with such violence against the side of the ridge, that they were clinging to the tangled rigging and broken masts for support. The fate of their late companions warned them not to commit themselves to the naked rocks, but death as certain awaited them in the situation they occupied. Yet a glimpse of hope existed, Walter C.

would not despair. His own galley had safely landed the royal party, and he imagined that he perceived some boats struggling towards them: but it was evident the tempest would not allow them to make their way through the breakers; and even if eventually they should succeed in reaching the wreck, he believed that their succour would arrive too late.

Melancholy was that scene, and heart-rending, as human eye ever witnessed. Inevitable destruction, the last sands dropping through life's glass, and eternity close at hand—the prospect might appal the valiant, as well as the virtuous heart. Each countenance betrayed the workings of an agonized spirit; but some, beyond others, yielded to passionate distress, and gesticulations of despair.

There was a man of a venerable mien, whose head was white; he knelt clasping a crucifix to his lips. His history was known to Courtenay; he had been engaged during a long life in mercantile affairs at Naples, and was now returning

to Provence, intending to pass the remainder of his days with the family of his only daughter, to be buried in his native valley. He seemed to support him in his awful situation, and it was only when one reflection crossed his mind, that his features were convulsed, and he recoiled with horror.—“ I thought,” he murmured, shuddering, “ I was to slumber in the glen of my childhood, the birds singing by my grave, the yew waving over the turf—but to be buffeted and tossed like a sea-weed on the savage sea, and to be devoured by the monsters of the deep! God of mercy! avert from me such a doom!”

Near the old man stood a person of middle age. His countenance, though scarcely altered by time, did not express the calm that mystery imparts by religion, but blank and utter despair. His eyes were bent on the threatening billow, his hair, drenched with the salt sea-spray, streamed in the tempest; and his gaunt hand was clenched.

“ Storm! do thy worst!” he was heard to exclaim.

cry; "death! thou art welcome. These waves will be an antidote for misery, for though I dare not be a suicide, I long to die."

An individual of a different character from the persons mentioned above, was clinging to the rigging close by Courtenay. He exhibited fear bordering on frenzy, and shivered through every fibre of his frame at the prospect of death. He had been an atheist, condemning and deriding not only the catholic faith, but every form of religion professed by man. The God he had dared and despised, forsook him now; and too late he was convinced of the sophistry of his impious reasonings. He gazed on the heaving mass of waters soon to roll over him—he recoiled and shrieked; then, clinging to Courtenay's knees, asked in piteous accents, if he could save him.

"Pray unto Him who raised, and can command the tempest, for He only can render thee assistance."

"Pray?" cried the wretched man; "my lips

are formed for curses, not supplications—the Jonah for whose iniquity you are perishing. Pray? I have even questioned the existence of a God, and laughed at all who bend the knee to their Maker.—will I save me now!—see, how the billows boom and how the vessel reels and crashes!—are the waves cold? no, I feel them already closing round me like a lake of fire. Save me, Englishmen, thou shalt have all my wealth!—Oh, God, whose name I have profaned, I must not, I cannot call upon thee—I must invoke only those who are waiting for me, to drag me down to their bottomless abyss, to inflict on me all their tortures—ha! ha! already I hear their voices—already their fiery scorpions are writhing round me—”

Even as he spoke, a sweeping billow dashed over the wreck, and the dark unbeliever dashed overboard, and sent shrieking into the deep.

Courtenay had witnessed many a traitor on the field of battle, but none which

him like that. Death was familiar to him, but it had never assumed so terrible an aspect as it wore there.—His attention was now directed to the last two persons who, with himself remained on the wreck, for in contemplating the horrors around him, he almost forgot his own approaching fate.

A lover was supporting his mistress; he was young, and she beautiful. That lady was the only female of Joanna's party doomed to perish, for she had refused to quit the royal galley without her betrothed. The cavalier's arm was around her waist; now she fainted, and now rising superior to the terrible scene, she addressed to him calm words. His features were the index of a soul wrung by agony, and he upbraided her for not having saved her own life when even he by their side, Walter Courtenay, wished to have borne her to his vessel.

"What! live and leave thee to perish, Romano? no, better expire with thee here, than suffer a lingering death—the death of a broken heart."

Her dark eyes were raised imploring Heaven; her snowy arms encircled her wreck, and her bosom was covered, as by her wet raven tresses.—Courtenay had approached nearer to them, but felt unable to impose any restraint on their closing moment, and, as he held by the rigging, the drowning their softer words, he witnessed the last scene of love.

Passionate gesticulations—kisses, kisses, followed by floods of tears—prayed God that their spirits might not be divided in the next world—close and still more closely to each other, until death itself seemed fast in that wild embrace—this was the scene which melted Courtenay's heart, and rendered him doubly thankful to Heaven, whom *he* also loved, was not there to witness his doom.

"Now I am happy, Romano—now resigned—the bitterness of death is past."

"Life of my life! with whom even to perish is bliss! the billows may roll over us now—God have mercy on his creatures, and receive our souls!"

A minute had not elapsed, when all that remained of the galley was lifted on a mountain wave, and dashed with tremendous violence on the rocks. The lovers, locked in each other's arms, were precipitated into the abyss, and the boiling wave swept over them, as it had engulfed the others. Then also, amidst white foam, and the crashing timbers of the wreck, might Courtenay have been seen struggling for life. He was an expert swimmer, but whether he clung to the rocks, or boldly struck out for the shore, perishing in the midway, none survived to tell.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SEARCH.

" No more thy soothing voice my anguish cheers.
 Thy placid eyes with smiles no longer glow,
 My hopes to cherish and allay my fears,
 'Tis meet that I should mourn - flow forth afresh my tears."

ALTHOUGH the Englishmen who manned the boats strained every nerve, they were unable for several hours, to reach the Altossi ridge. The gale had somewhat abated, and the waves lessened their fury, when they arrived. Yet the Arturians found they were not in time to save the unfortunate individuals who had been killed by necessity on the wreck: nothing was seen but the sharp points of the rocks starting out of the waves, loose planks tossed here and there, and cords and tattered sails floating about like

weed. The whole proclaimed that the wreck had gone to pieces, and that all who remained there, had found a watery grave.

On drawing nearer to the fatal ridge, they discovered, washed into its cavities, the clothes of some Italian seamen; the wearers, they presumed, had cast them off, with a view to save themselves by swimming; but, amidst the boiling breakers, scarcely a chance existed that any had reached the distant shore.

One of the Englishmen suddenly exclaimed that he had found the doublet and plumed cap which belonged to Courtenay; his belt, and crimson mantle, likewise, were floating near: the interest which this created among the party may be conceived; that he, also, had hoped to save his life by means of swimming, was evident; but what could have been their gallant leader's fate?

Proceeding onwards to a part of the ridge at some distance from the spot where the vessel had struck, they found several lifeless bodies,

which had been thrown upon the crags by the violence of the waves. It would appear, from the fragments, that the crew had been endeavouring to escape from the wreck, and that several persons had been killed by the dashing of the waves against the rigging and spars; for the bodies were in so mutilated a condition, that scarcely one of them could be recognized. The Adventurers, however, carefully examined them, and one in particular attracted their attention; the face was much disfigured, but the colour of the hair resembled that of the leader; the moustache and beard were perfectly like his, the length of limb, and broadness of chest, corresponded also with the person of Peter Courtenay. From these and other points of resemblance, therefore, they came to a conclusion, that the figure before them was the English Captain.

Deep was the grief of those faithful men, who chiefly they lamented, that he, their leader, who had acquired such high renown—the flower of chivalry, the generous, the noble, had not died as a soldier should die—with sword in hand.

The Battle of the

They wrapped his mortal remains carefully in a sail, and placing him in one of their boats, rowed off for Nice: as they proceeded they chanted, with rough voices, a soldier's dirge, such as they had learnt from one of the popular *jongleurs* of the day; we give the reader the concluding lines:—

“ ——— His limbs are cold, his career is o'er,
His falchion shall gleam in the fight no more;
His faithful charger may feed on the plain,
He ne'er shall ride him to battle again.
For him in vain his ladye shall sigh,
With a cloud on her brow, and a tear in her eye.
His foes will exult, his friends will mourn,
And Glory will kneel by his flower-wreathed urn.
Yea, the star of his fame, eternal and bright,
Shall shine through the clouds of Mortality's night;
And warriors and princes shall visit his grave,
And Beauty shed tears o'er the gallant and brave.”

Meantime, Queen Joanna, having retired from the Cathedral, the principal palace in Nice was offered to her as a residence. It was pleasantly situated near the sea, and commanded an extensive and beautiful prospect. The day was nearly spent, and the tempest had entirely ceased;

light airs wafted perfume from the grove and gardens which adorned the shores; and the sun in the calm west reposed on a couch of purple clouds, capping the hill-tops with crowns of living fire. So, in the moral world, the storms of fate, although they may darken and pour upon the commencement of life, and even extend through its mid career, will oftentimes melt away, and settle into bright tranquillity; and our days will close in the sunshine of peace and happiness.

Amalia sat in a chamber alone: one thought, one idea only was present to her mind—the thought of Walter Courtenay; for her fears were that he could not by any possibility have escaped destruction. It is said that friends and lovers never know the strength of their affection until accident or death severs them from each other. Then all the good qualities of the beloved objects, unshaded by one dark remembrance, beam forth, and awaken admiration and affection. Then they feel that void in their bosoms,

they suppose can never be filled up this side of the grave.—Oh! what intense pleasure yet pain to dwell on their remembered features! to call to mind their slightest actions! a flower they loved, a scene they admired, are invested with a nameless charm; and the mourners feel that were Heaven to restore the lost ones to earth, they should love them, if it were possible, with tenfold devotion.

Amalia thought of the chivalrous qualities, and brave deeds of him she believed to be no more. Yet in the part which he had performed in the late calamitous event, not so much did she admire his conduct to Joanna and herself, as the anxiety he evinced for the aged Constable, and the tender care with which he had conveyed him from the wreck. Any enthusiastic cavalier, she considered, might have risked his life to save a queen; but the latter deed was prompted by philanthropy, and bespoke a truly noble and generous mind.

And was he gone for ever? Yes, that form

on which, herself unseen, she had so long gazed with sensations of delight, was now hers, but as the clod of the valley. She pressed her head upon her hand, and gazed over the wide ocean; its bosom heaved, although the tempest had sunk to rest, long lines of light irradiated the glassy billows, and, as the softened cry, the sea-bird again flew from its sheltering cavern to enjoy the salubrious evening. Nature breathed tranquillity, but the storm dwelt in that maiden's breast.

A light step caused Amalia to start from her sad reverie—Joanna had entered the room.

"I bring thee tidings," said the Queen, "the boats have returned from their search of the Altossi rocks."

Light flashed to Amalia's eye, and her heart, which the slightest incident will wound, awakened in the heart of the wretched, was for a moment in her bosom.

"What!" she cried, in breathless agony, "have they rescued him? is he safe? are they returned with them?"

"Alas! my poor girl;" said Joanna; "how shall I answer thy question? they have indeed found Walter Courtenay—but—"

"Ah! I understand you," she exclaimed, her sudden excitement having passed away; "they have returned with his lifeless body!"

"Even so," observed Joanna; "they have borne him to the cathedral, where mass is to be said for his soul, and where in military pomp due to his valour, he is to be buried."

"It is enough!" cried Amalia rising, and leaning on the Queen; "the last ray of hope is extinguished for ever. Pardon me—I am not what I should be—my brain is dizzy, my heart is sick—support me—Joanna, my friend, my sister!"

* * * * *

Some days passed; the identity of the mortal remains of the English Captain never having been disputed, they were committed to the last resting place of all living; and the inhabitants of Nice, at the request of the Queen, had begun

to erect a marble pillar on the shore, in commemoration of his heroic actions.

Joanna and her Court were detained at longer than they contemplated, in consequence of certain disputes arising between them and the Provençal nobility. Matters, however, having been arranged, they departed for Avignon, where, it was presumed, Prince Louis and the Bishop of Florence, together with the Italian counsellors whom they had retained, had already arrived.

The determination of the Queen and her Consort to solicit a trial, and plead their innocence before the Pope in full consistory, was noised over Europe. The witnesses, whose office would be to substantiate the guilt of the royal parties, were to be produced by the Hungarian King; our old friend, the Bulgar Waradin, headed this black association of calumniators, and they were already on their way to Avignon.

From tower and town, from city and f

country, thousands were flocking to be present at this trial, the most singular and interesting that history records. A Pope and his Cardinals were to sit in judgment on a Prince and Queen ; and their irrevocable decree would reinstate the exiles in their kingdom, or consign them to a dungeon—perhaps a scaffold.

END OF VOLUME II.

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THE TRADUCED.

VOL. III.

THE TRADUCED.

AN

HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY N. MICHELL;

AUTHOR OF

THE FATALIST; OR THE FORTUNES OF GODOLPHIN &c

Italia! Oh Italia! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woe and past;
On thy sweet brow is sorrow ploughed by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame.

Childe Harold.

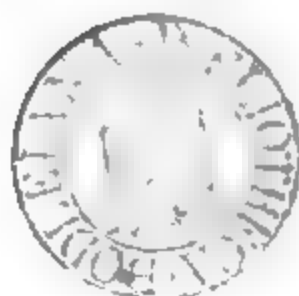
IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. III.

L O N D O N :

T. AND W. BOONE, 29, NEW BOND STREET:

1842.



CHAPTER I.

VAUCLUSE.

Yes, I have gazed on Petrarch's glassy fountain,
Have wandered down the vale of calm Vaucluse,
When summer robed in green each glen and mountain,
And evening spread o'er all her magic hues.—
Ah! me, how passing sweet to sit and muse
Beneath the planes by Sorgia's silver tide!
There Petrarch's glowing page I would peruse,
Till fancy saw the poet by my side,
Or Laura's beauteous shade by rock and fountain glide.

M.

THE fame of Petrarch has suffered no diminution through the lapse of time; yet it is not lofty genius displayed in any work of extraordinary merit, that has won for him the wreath of immortality. His "Africa," and other Latin productions are departing, if they have not already passed, to the tomb of "all the Capulets;" and his sonnets, although they breathe the soul of

elegance and love, cannot warrant him, in company with Dante and Tasso, as a poet. But a charm is thrown around him, inasmuch as he was the reviver of classical and polite literature, in an unlettered age; he gave the Italian language a polish and refinement which it was thought incapable of. And who has not heard of his love? how ardent as it was misplaced; as extraordinary in its duration, as it was intellectual and free from all sensuality.

In truth were Petrarch deprived of his connexion with Laura, or could we believe what authors have affirmed, that the beauty of Laura never existed save in the fancy-chamber of the Poet's brain, how would the interest of Petrarch's name be lessened! how would the spell of enchantment be broken!

But to the tale of Laura's non-existence we will not give credit. We will believe that the passion which breathes and burns in his sonnets, was the genuine language of

and not the conceits of the brain. Yes, his name shall be syllabled still by the lips of a myriad of lovers. Poets, yet unborn, shall visit, with feelings of enthusiasm and veneration, the solitude of Vacluse; and travellers of all nations, as they pass near the mountain village of Arqua, shall turn from their path, and sigh over the mouldering tomb of the Tuscan Poet.

It was a calm spring morning; no cloud obscured the sun, or cast a taint upon the blue expanse of heaven; the breeze was loaded with fragrance; the birds, no longer saddened by the gloom of winter, filled with melody the woods which encircled the valley of Vacluse. Flowers, with their countless dyes, had begun to variegate the meadows, and to bloom along the banks of the Sorgia; which storied river, winding its noiseless silver way, now concealed by overhanging rocks, and now bursting on the admiring view, seemed like virtue, more beautiful for its retiring modesty, stealing on through life's vale of sorrow.

Not far from the immortalized fountain, separated from the river only by a small meadow, stood a rustic cottage; its roof was made of pine-branches thickly interwoven with moss, as to exclude the rain; the walls were of stone; in front grew a myrtle, which was so thick that it almost concealed the windows and the door. The dwelling breathed an air of peace and content; within its walls a peasant might dwell, or a monarch find repose from the cares of a kingdom—and this was the retreat of Petrarch!

On an oaken seat, shaded by a large, spreading favourite tree, sat the poet and his friend; behind him peered the cottage, before him lay his garden, and beyond rolled the crystal waters of the Sorgia. No sound floated on the air except the song of birds in the neighbouring groves, and the soothing murmurs of the river. One arm lay extended on a table, the other he supported his head. As he sat, and was he in meditation, that a little breeze

had tamed, and taught to eat from his hand, perched near him unheeded; and his favourite dog placed his paws on his knee, and whined for notice in vain.

The Poet had passed the prime of life, yet his brow was unwrinkled; his features, finely chiseled as those of the master-statue of the Greek, were noble and dignified; his eye which shone with undiminished lustre, was the mirror of an aspiring but amiable mind, and betrayed by its changeful restless glance, whether it be a virtue or a foible, extreme sensibility of heart.

Petrarch started, as if he had caught some exquisite idea, or had framed some glowing image. He seized a pen—he wrote with rapidity, and in a few minutes produced a sonnet. It was that beautiful one which extols the imperishable charms of Laura's mind:

*"Leggiadria singolare e pellegrina,
E'l cantar che nell'anima si sente,"* &c. &c.

"Yes," he cried, "though beauty never shone on earth so radiant as thine; though those eyes

seem to have borrowed light from
though thy pencilled brow rivals the
heaven; though love sports around thy
and lies ambushed on thy dimpled cheek
mind, thy mind, Oh, Laura! surpasses
fascinations! the play of fancy, the
of wit, the snow of innocence, and the
virtue—these render thee the adorable
thou art—De Sade, how I envy thy
treasure!"

He flung down his pen, and pressed
a miniature to his lips; it was that of Laura
had been painted when she was in the
youth. He grew more calm, and offered
bird some grains from his hand, which
with the license of a favourite, sprang
knee, and received his wonted caresses.

Petrarch sat motionless for a few minutes
he cast his eye on some implements
which lay near, for many a weary hour
recluse beguile by the quiet sport of
His rod in one hand, and a copy of P.

his arm, the philosopher now quitted his garden, and, followed by his dog, sauntered down the valley. It was not long before he reached that part of the stream favourable to fishing, and seating himself upon a green bank, he commenced his solitary pastime.

Often and long did he cast his line into the crystal waters, but no fish would swallow the Poet's bait; he possessed, however, that patience so requisite to the lovers of the angle. "Thus in the world," he murmured, "does man endeavour to seize the coy spirit of bliss: but like the fish in the brook, happiness comes not at his bidding; even when he deems it nearest, it turns, and shines, and flits away."

A large trout at that instant leaped up at a short distance from him, and as it darted down the current, the recluse could perceive it in the clear water approaching his bait. Softly and slowly did the wary fish advance—it swayed its tail to and fro, thrust its mouth at the angle—again retired and remained still. Petrarch moved

the bait away in an enticing manner, the fish followed. "He is mine!" thought the smiling angler; but no, as if aware of deception, the old trout suddenly plunged even no more.

"Well, well;" Petrarch whispered self; "I deserve not success. What a thing? a profitless, and an insignificant success! it recreates my mind after study, it calms my mental fever, and abstracts my thoughts from their one absorbing dream. yet wherefore do I desire the last? love is my element, I was born to breathe its atmosphere; I have no choice, it whether it be noxious or salubrious, breathing the air of passion must I die."

It is said that the captive, after long imprisonment, will mourn when set free. In his dungeon, he has made a friend of the darkness; he has amused himself by counting the days in his cell, and the weight of his fetters is felt no more. So was it with this extraordinary man; for twenty years he had worn the

of a fruitless tyrannic love ; his heart had been in a prison lighted only by the eyes of one vainly adored ; and yet had his shackles been removed, he would have experienced that void, that restlessness, that longing again to hug the chain, more bitter to be endured than all his previous suffering.

A light careless song of one advancing up the valley, now caught Petrarch's ear : the figure in the distance seemed to be that of an old man ; he was a fisherman named Rudel, a peasant well known to Petrarch, for his cottage was near his own. Rudel, on perceiving the Philosopher, ceased his ditty, and respectfully approached him, doing obeisance according to the manner of the country. This man was regarded as the great news-gatherer, and chronicler of the district, for to dispose of his fish, he daily visited the neighbouring towns and villages, bringing thence intelligence of all that was going forwards. Petrarch, with the curiosity peculiar to men who pass their days in retirement, put sundry inter-

recognitions to the worthy fisherman relate the latest news.

"News! news! I have enough to tell you, honoured Signor!" exclaimed Rudel, his face brightening like a living diamond; "the world is turned topsy-turvy; Aversa is now swarming with strangers just like a hive of bees. The whole earth talks of nothing but the death of the Queen of Naples, (our Ladye grant her grace) and her husband Prince Louis. They are both to be pleaded before the Pope, and will be found guilty of having compassed the death of King Andrea's death, they will both have their heads on the scaffold! the Lord of Aversa is right!"

The garrulity of the old fisherman contrasted with the smile on Petrarch's sedate countenance.

"Hast thou heard the tale confirmed by the Duke of Rudel, respecting the celebrated English knight who, it is reported, lost his life in rescuing Joanna and her followers, when shipwrecked off the coast of Nice!"

"Of a verity I have heard all, learned Signor," cried Rudel; "and doubt no longer rests on the matter. The brave Englishman was drowned; they have found his body, and the good citizens of Nice are now erecting on the sea-shore, a lofty pillar to his memory."

Petrarch sighed; "what," he thought, "will this honour avail him? perhaps, too, when I am no more, men will raise a monument to me. But shall we sleep more sweetly because busy mortals decorate our last abode?"

At this moment, the sound of a trumpet was borne from a distance, and the Poet and fisherman perceived a gay cavalcade entering the upper part of the valley of Vaucluse; Petrarch started, for a sudden recollection crossed his mind; yes, absorbed in his meditations, he had entirely forgotten that Queen Joanna had fixed that day for holding a conference with him, being desirous of visiting his solitude in person.

No time was to be lost; he might yet reach his cottage before the arrival of the royal party.

He glanced at his habiliments; his mantle was his worst, and his silk hose soiled with mire. He no longer, however, the days of his youth, affected the extravagance of his personal appearance; philosophy had diminished the foibles engendered by vanity. Bidding Rudel follow with his rod, he proceeded up the valley to receive his visitors.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROYAL VISIT.

A hater of society no doubt, but not by providence intended to be so. Misanthropy in his head, not in his heart.

Kotschub's Stranger.

Louis and Joanna, in compliment to him whom princes were proud to call their friend, alighted at the gate of the cottage garden ; Amalia, Boccaccio, the Bishop of Florence, and other Italian ladies and nobles, followed their example. They were saluted by the Poet with that elegance and urbanity which ever distinguished his manner

Various remarks and enquiries having been made, they all seated themselves beneath the plane trees in front of the cottage. The group, where youth and age, genius and royalty were mingled, presented a pleasing spectacle. They

conversed much respecting the beautiful spot, and Queen Joanna and Boccaccio were enraptured with Vauluse.

"Fair friends!" observed the Queen, "I such a retreat as this, with a few companions and my lord by my side, I should so certainly entertain a wish to remount a throne. I sit by a glassy stream, and among those warbling birds, how calmly, how entrancingly, methinks the hours would glide! what sayst thou, Prince?"

The exiled Prince smiled, but was silent.

"I will deliver to thee *my* opinion," said the old High Constable: "I have seen Naples," said the old High Constable: "I have seen Naples, and I think it would be suited to a man of genius like Petrarcha, but your Highness would not be in company with your glassy streams, and your warbling woods, one week, before thou wert tired for very weariness. Certes, old as I am, I am not enamoured of the vanities of the world; I can truly say, that, rather than be confined and imprisoned in this den of rocks and water, I would be off from communion with my kind—fare ye well."

Signor Petrarca—I would labour in the capacity of a galley-slave for the remainder of my life.”

Petrarch observed that the notions of the Constable, to a certain extent, originated in a sound and healthy philosophy. He thought that the Queen was too young, and possessed of too philanthropic a spirit for a recluse; and that much happiness awaited her in a world which she was so eminently calculated to adorn.

“For myself,” he said, “although I am not aware of harbouring enmity against any of my fellow creatures, I relish not the gay society of my contemporaries. I was not formed to move in Courts; but prefer communing with my own thoughts, and schooling my mind in solitude. My delight is gathered from the literary fields of past ages; and in company with Pliny, Horace, and Virgil, I forget that I am a being of the fourteenth century. Ye know that I am not without my sorrows, but God hath apportioned to me, also, my share of happiness.”

The Queen's shipwreck was the next subject

of conversation; and as Petrarch had not an authentic account of the catastrophe related it. When Courtenay's name was mentioned, Amalia quitted the party, and went down the Poet's garden, to cull flowers, and to divert her grief by gazing on the landscape prospect around her.

The grand object of the Queen's visit to Vaucluse, was the last topic to be mentioned; but now the Bishop of Florence, conversing with Petrarch apart, disclosed to him the names of Prince Louis and Joanna.

"Your voice," he said, "in the Consistory will avail much. I am to exert my humble efforts in their favour, being supported by B. Angelus of Perugia. Howbeit, the setting forth of their innocence, will be no easy task, the malice, and false representations of their enemies, may obtain considerable credit with the Cardinals; for that wily Friar now Bishop of Waradin, report states, is now in Avignon a host of perjured Hungarians, he dares call witnesses."

Petrarch was thoughtful; to be dragged again into the arena of public observation, when he would fain have retired for ever, was opposed alike to his resolutions and his feelings. Nevertheless, if he could render any assistance to the cause of innocence—the cause of an injured and traduced Queen, humanity and duty called upon him to yield his services.

“My lord Bishop!” he cried, “didst thou name Robert of Hungary? I knew him when a Cordelian Friar, and a greater hypocrite never wore frock and hood. But the serpent hath fangs, and he may prove a powerful enemy.—My honoured friend, the little ability or interest which I may possess, the Prince and Queen shall command; I will appear at the Consistory.”

The venerable Bishop having informed Louis and Joanna of Petrarch’s acquiescence with their wishes, the royal fugitives were warm in their expressions of gratitude. But now the illustrious party rose to take their leave, and in a few minutes their brilliant *cortège* might have

been seen winding down the beautiful valley of Vaucluse; the Bishop of Florence, however, remained behind, for Petrarch wished to obtain all the information possible, relative to the measures of the Hungarian King.

As they ascended the hill, the travellers turned to gaze once more on the silver river, the Poet's cottage, and the romantic woods.

"Favoured Bard! beautiful retreat! would that I could repose for ever amid those quiet shades!" sighed Joanna.

"Give me a mansion in some social city where there is always something new to hear and to behold, and I reck not if ever again I see a green field!" responded the High Constable.

CHAPTER III.

THE HUNGARIANS.

A goodly party pricking on the road,
I did espy echad in liveries gay ;
The mire and foam that soiled their horses shewed
The wights had gone a sore and weary way.

Old Ballad.

THERE is no part of ancient Dauphiny and Provence more beautiful, perhaps, than that portion of the country which extends between Valence and Avignon. Little of the magnificent or sublime strikes the traveller ; but his eye reposes on all that is luxuriant, picturesque, and lovely. Groves of myrtle and olive spread before him ; ever and anon, starts up some gentle hill, covered with vines, and crowned by a convent. Vallies, overhung with wood, disclose within their bosoms the limpid lake, beside which stands the moulder-

ing feudal castle. But the charm of the country is the majestic Rhone, its deep-blue waters foaming between banks that display châteaux and busy villages ; like Time, it never flags in its course, rushing, bounding on, an adornment to nature, and a blessing to man.

Advancing along the road on the east side of the river, was seen a gay cavalcade ; three trumpeters rode in front, appareled in cloth of gold. An open chariot, drawn by four Arabians, succeeded ; in this were seated two persons, the elder of whom, as it would seem by his vestments, was a man of the church. Close behind came a lank-limbed domestic officer, who bestrode his steed clumsily, but whose long countenance was full of grave importance. A host of red-whiskered and morose-looking men followed ; they filled four chariots, of less splendid appearance than the one already mentioned. A troop of men-at-arms, whose feathered helmets and flowing mantles, bespoke them Hungarians, closed the procession.

And this was Robert Bishop of Waradin, conducting his witnesses to Avignon: he acted as plenipotentiary of the Hungarian King, for the latter was too busily occupied in his new government of Naples to attend the Consistory in person.

Robert, in his persecution of Queen Joanna and her husband, might have been prompted in part by feelings of revenge and motives of ambition; yet beyond these common spurs of erring humanity, did the love of inflicting pain upon others, and of blackening the characters of those who, he felt, were better than himself, urge him forward in his nefarious career.

The Prelate sat at his ease in his rolling chariot: in place of his mitre, ostentatiously exhibited on too many occasions, he wore, for the convenience of travelling, a high velvet conical cap, with the figure of a cross in front. His black vestments were drawn loosely over his paunch, which was even of larger dimensions, than when we last beheld him; his face, also,

had become more bloated, but his legs, at the same time, were more miserably shrivelled. He surveyed not the prospect around him ; the beauty and brightness of the scene, accorded not with the deformity and darkness of his mind ; yet with a demure countenance, as though all within his bosom was serenity, peace, and love, he gazed upon an image of the Virgin Mary, which he had placed in front of the chariot.

The man who occupied a seat by Robert's side, was a very remarkable looking personage ; his head was of extraordinary dimensions, so much so, that if ability be proportioned to bulk of brain, he must have been eminently clever. His hair hung in uncombed and huge masses over his brawny shoulders ; his eyes were half closed and heavy, except when lighted up by some passing thought or emotion, when they burned and flashed with savage fierceness. This singular person was Smolensko, the great lawyer of Buda, the man in whom, next to Ro-

bert, the Hungarian King reposed his hope of proving before Pope Clement and his Cardinals, the guilt of Louis and Joanna.

The renowned oracle of law maintained a dignified silence, save when at times he would mutter 'amen' to the solemn interjections of the Bishop, who, ever and anon, called upon Heaven to favour their cause, and pour vengeance on the royal murderess and her husband.

The travellers had arrived within a few miles of Avignon, when a strange and amusing spectacle on the road before them, attracted their attention. A man was observed mounted upon a mule; but he rode in the reversed manner, his face fronting the animal's tail. His wide-brimmed slouched hat, ample robe of broadcloth, and long grizzly beard, bespoke him to be a descendant of Abraham. Many were his antic gestures, as he swayed about his staff, and smote his mule; now he shouted oaths, and cursed the Christians; and then he sang a Hebrew hymn. A little further on, rode a woman and a boy; they

belonged to the same despised race, but had nothing extraordinary in their appearance.

Forester called on the Jew to move out of the path, lest the chariot should roll over him ; but totally disregarding the notice, and firmly sitting his mule's back, he shook his staff in a menacing manner, and bawled aloud. It was evident to all that he was a lunatic.

“ Oh, Gentiles ! outcasts ! who shall never inherit the kingdom of Heaven, are ye bound for Avignon ? for to that city, Solomon son of Reuben wendeth. The land around is a goodly land ; yonder tower the hills of Samaria ; here rolleth the river Jordan ; cedars flourish, flowers bloom ; 'tis, I say, a fat land ; yet I have enough ducats in my coffers at Naples, to buy and sell all within this immense horizon.”

The Jew was now obliged to belabour his mule in order to keep ahead of the chariot.

“ Ye Christians ! worshippers of Dagon ! scum of the earth ! know that I am going to visit the Pope. Is he wealthy as I ? are his

money-bags as large, is his well as deep as mine ? I intend to submit a question to this Pope ; pshaw ! what is Queen Joanna's cause to mine ? my cause is about sixty thousand marks—Ah ! I forget ; did I say I was rich ? no, no, like Job of old, I have lost all. But the good Pope shall force the villains to pay me back every sequin they have robbed me of, or I am not Solomon the son of Reuben.”

The Hebrew's eye now caught the features of Robert, whom he seemed to recognize, for he flew at once into a paroxysm of rage.

“ Holy Abraham ! whom do I behold ? son of Belial ! thou art one of them ! thou wert in league with the vile and unjust Duke of Durazzo. Give me back my sixty thousand marks, or I will take thy life.”

“ What doth the Jew mean ? ” exclaimed Robert, for he was ignorant of the practices to which Durazzo had resorted for the raising of money ; although had he been acquainted with the truth, such was the cruel and unjust treat-

ment which the Jews were then subjected to, that it was very probable he would have applauded—not condemned the Duke's conduct.

“ Give me back my monies, I say !” continued the enraged Israelite, who now brandished his staff so near the chariot, that Forester was compelled to spring forwards, and drag the lunatic on one side of the road. But Rachael, and the lad Methuselah, hastening to the spot, begged that the travellers would do no injury to the unfortunate man.

“ Alas ! signòri !” said the kind-hearted, and excellent woman ; “ ye perceive that my poor husband is not what he has been ; barbarous treatment, and grievous losses, have affected his brain. He has travelled all this weary way from Naples on a supposition that the Pope will redress his wrongs : I have yielded to his entreaties in accompanying him, for I entertained hopes that change of scene would restore to him his lost understanding.”

“ Unhappy madman !” exclaimed the great lawyer of Buda, who rolled his eyes, threw his

massy locks back over his shoulders, and relapsed into his accustomed reverie.

"*Ab illo exi, spiritus impure !* out, unclean spirit !" cried Robert raising his hands, as if to exorcise the Jew.

But the Israelite, heeding them not, struggled desperately with Forester.

" Master Solomon, excuse me, but thou must to the rear with the men-at-arms ; tell them thy wrongs 'an thou dost please ; but thou mayest retard no longer the chariot of the holy Bishop of Waradin."

" Unhand me ! bold Gentile, unhand me ! I mad ! I am sane, quite sane. Father Abraham ! let me get at that man in the black gaberdine, for he shall die. What ! wilt thou then drag me backwards ? the Pope shall know of this— Oh ! my sixty thousand marks !"

The voice of the unfortunate Solomon, the once wealthy merchant of Naples, was heard no more, for Forester had succeeded in placing him in the rear with the men-at-arms.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WITNESSES.

" He taught them how to lie, and thrust the blow,
Unseen by all, and mock at others' woe ;
Like Satan schooling his dark imps below."

" I pray thee hear me speak."

Merchant of Venice.

THE approach of Robert to the City of Avignon was no sooner known, than all the partisans of the King of Hungary issued from the gates to welcome him, and to do him honour. For some months previously, emissaries from the Hungarian Court had been busy in exciting the public feeling against Louis and Joanna. Nevertheless, it was a source of gratification to the latter to find that their enemies were principally the most profligate and abandoned characters, and, in a great measure, confined to the lowest orders of the people.

Be it as it might, Robert found his party numerous in the city of Avignon, and he resorted to his usual method of writing, and public speaking, in order to inflame still further the minds of the populace. Pictures were drawn by his order, and hung in conspicuous places, representing the atrocious deed of Louis and Joanna. But the royal Hungarian was ever styled the upright king, the religious king, and the friend and father of the people.

The indefatigable Bishop had fixed his residence in the centre of the city, that he might the better spy all that was going forwards. He was sitting alone, his learned friend and assistant, the lawyer of Buda, being busily engaged at the house of a certain prothonotary, arranging his papers, and preparing his oration for the approaching trial.

It is said that a bad man has no greater enemy than himself; that he dreads to commune with his own bosom; and shuns solitude with a precaution amounting to terror. This may be true as

far as regards the first stage of crime ; but when the mind has been long accustomed to sin, an obduracy of heart, a torpidness of conscience ensue, with a total fearlessness of Him, whose mercy hath withheld as yet his avenging thunder. Thus was it with Robert ; while conscious of his iniquities, he felt no compunction ; and while believing in a Deity, he dreaded not his wrath, nor shrank at the anticipation of future punishment.

His arms were folded ; a quiet smile dwelt on his lip, and his air was that of perfect self-satisfaction.

“ To what point am I arrived ? ” he muttered ; “ I see my enemies quail before me—can man desire more ? Independently of winning the good graces of the Hungarian King, I do my own pleasure in bringing to ignominy this hated Prince and Queen. They would have opposed my advancement in the church ; they set at nought my advice when I formed one of the council ; what though they be innocent of Prince

Andrea's murder; what though they be full of uprightness and honour; it is enough that I detest them. How sweet to show them to the world wretches—murderers! ha! ha!—” and the Bishop gave a low laugh, and rubbed his hands in fiendish glee. He then stamped on the floor, and, at the summons, Forester made his appearance from the ante-chamber. Robert gave him several directions respecting the duties he had to perform, and warned him, on pain of perpetual imprisonment in the Inquisition, never to divulge any thing he might hear or see in that palace.

“Doubt not my faith and secrecy, my lord Bishop:” replied the devoted Servitor.

Robert questioned him in reference to some writings, which certain notaries were to transcribe and circulate among the people; “And now, sirrah,” he added, “fetch the witnesses hither, who, I understand, are in the vestibule below, for they must receive their first lesson.”

In a few minutes Forester returned with a troop of savage looking fellows, twelve in

forth, will, I am of opinion, be sufficient.—First, groom of the bed-chamber, Ladislaus, what wilt thou state in condemnation of Joanna !”

“Your Holiness—state—hem !” answered the Hungarian ; “Why, my lord Bishop, that the day before the night on which our dear Prince died, I saw the Queen in the Celestine Gardens, consulting with two men of most forbidding aspect. As they walked beneath the trees, I saw daggers under their cloaks ; but deeming it no business of mine, I dared not make any remark. Will this do, your Holiness ?”

“Extremely well, Ladislaus ;” answered Robert ; “neither add to, nor take from thy assertion. Worthy Matthias Corvinus, what hast thou to say ?”

“I, my lord Bishop ? a hundred things—this circumstance, and that circumstance—on this day, and on that day—here and there—”

“Hold ! thy tongue runs too glibly ;” interrupted Robert. “I wish but one statement ; dost thou not understand ?”

" Well, your Holiness, I will declare that, waking about the eighth hour of the night,—yes, it must have been after the deed had been performed—I heard a low voice in the gallery adjoining my chamber. I knew it to be Queen Joanna's : ' Retire, Signòri,' she said, ' ye have performed your duty well—let him hang there. Away to Rome, and inform Prince Louis that his wishes are accomplished.' Nothing guessing what the Queen meant, I again sank to sleep ; and, our Lady forgive me ! the next day and long afterwards, from weak reprehensible pity for a Prince and a Queen, I forbore to mention this dreadful circumstance."

" Excellent !" said Robert, rubbing his hands ; " worthy Matthias Corvinus, excellent ! what will the Cardinals say to this ! Huniades, royal door-keeper, we wait for thy deposition."

" Your holiness, my evidence shall be brief," said Huniades ; " for I am an enemy to long speeches ; I admire not your orations adorned with flowers of rhetoric ; therefore, as I said, my

statement shall be brief: however, should there be time in the Consistory, I might exert my oratorical powers, for I lack not talent that way, though I say it who should not. Nevertheless, your Holiness—”

“Huniades!” exclaimed Robert; “I doubt not thy ability—yet, methinks, thou art any thing but laconic.”

“Pardon me, my lord Bishop, if I say I am most brief, most laconic. There is no man who understands the admirable method of saying much in a little compass, better than your servant. St. Stephen bless your Holiness! I have declaimed in our senate at Zombor; my speech was transcribed by the Gespan Chast's head clerk; should my lord Bishop desire to see it, I refer him to the Star Library in that town; it fills thirty sheets folio—nevertheless—”

“My worthy and excellent friend!” cried Robert; “proceed with thy statement touching Queen Joanna—or give me the fact, and I will clothe it in language for thee.”

"Clothe it in language for me?" exclaimed Huniades, with a haughty wave of his right arm; "as if I could not say my own say—I who have learnt Greek, and studied Demosthenes and Cicero, those masters of concise and powerful speaking! I who have been cheered so often in public, and all for my haranguing to the purpose! By the Diet of Presburgh! saving my lord Bishop's presence—"

"Huniades of Hungary!" vociferated Robert; completely out of patience; "as thou dost hope for a reward, give in thy accusation without digressing a moment longer."

The worthy orator, here remembering himself, spoke with more precision than, from his rambling preamble, Robert was led to expect.

"Beg pardon, your Holiness—will be brief—was on duty in Castel-Nuovo three months after death of Prince Andrea—swear I saw Louis enter Queen's apartment disguised as a priest—listened at the door, heaven forgive me for it!—the Prince said, 'Our plans have succeeded;

Andrea is no more; we shall now share the throne together!" Prince embraced the Queen and retired. I would have divulged the whole; but the Queen discovering that I knew the secret, with tears and prayers bound me to silence. Alas! beauty of woman prevailed awhile, but conscience now telleth me, I must unveil her guilt to the world."

"Thanks, Huniades, thanks!" said Robert; "make this plain statement before the Cardinals, and next year I will create thee a Gespan Chast; yea, by the holy rood; a member of our National Diet, where thou wilt soon become, I doubt not, one of our most brilliant speakers."

We shall not detain the reader with a further account of Robert's examination. Having heard the charge which each witness intended to prefer against Louis and Joanna, he dismissed them; but in order that they might not forget their respective parts, he commanded them to appear before him every day, until the meeting of the Consistory.

"Forester, fetch me a flask of my best *lachryma Christi*;" said the Prelate, as the former returned from conducting the Hungarians to the palace door; "I would fain recruit my outward man, for the severe duty which I have undergone hath exhausted both my body and my spirit."

CHAPTER V.

THE MUSICIAN.

" Oh ! sleep not yet, my lady love !
Night's stars begin to beam ;
Look forth and shame those orbs above !
Thine eyes more brightly gleam.
Spurn not thy constant lover's prayer,
He lives upon thy breath ;
Thy smile will chase his soul's despair—
Thy frown—Oh ! that is death !"

ABOUT a mile north of the city of Avignon, and overlooking the " rushing" Rhone, stood one of Pope Clement's magnificent palaces. The building blended the strong castle with the abode suited to luxury and peace. Behind the edifice was a garden containing grottoes and fountains, and planted with flowers of every rare and gorgeous description. And this was the mansion which Clement had appointed for the temporary residence of Queen Joanna and Louis.

The sun had not yet sunk, but his downward beams were beginning to flood with glory the far hills of Languedoc. The hum of the city was heard from a distance; and the birds still warbled along the banks of the Rhone, although with a softened note, as if bidding farewell to the declining luminary.

Issuing from the southern door of the palace, might have been seen the figure of a female; she was wrapped in a mantilla lined with miniver; a coif of white net-work confined her ringlets, and a veil of rich Flanders lace partially concealed her features. She was alone, and walked with a slow hesitating step into the garden. She paid no attention to the fountains or flowers, but held in her hand a scroll of parchment; it was incised thickly with verses, the latest and most beautiful sonnets of Petrarch. These she seemed committing to memory, and then reciting to herself. She faintly smiled, probably at the fervour of the poet; but at the same time tears filled her eyes, and reaching an arbour, she threw herself upon a rustic seat.

It was Amalia; time had softened the first poignancy of the grief she felt at Courtenay's death, but a melancholy had succeeded which preyed upon her too sensitive mind, and made fearful ravages upon her delicate frame.

Man, when he has loved in vain, may feel long and acutely; but he has resources and expedients to dissipate his sorrow, and obliterate impressions, of which woman is not possessed. The affairs of life urge him to activity; the pursuit of wealth or honour may engross his attention; and in the toil and tumult of the world, although he may not forget, yet memory of the past will daily lose a portion of its bitterness.

But woman, whose chief happiness is drawn from the fountain of the affections; whose nature leans on man for protection, and who too frequently casts her all upon the die of love; when the object on which her heart has doated is reft from her, and in the wide world she knows and feels she can love no other; what expedient may she resort to? what path is open to her?

The quiet life she leads nurses, not extinguishes the lamp of memory; the present offers no consolation; she can weave no fairy dreams for the future; her thoughts must dwell on the past; the canker must remain at her heart, and the consequence too often is an untimely grave.

Amalia watched the sun sinking over the distant hills; the yellow light illumined the hanging forests, and bathed in gold the numerous convent-spires which shot up, like pyramids of flame, from amidst the dark green foliage. The vesper-bells, from the pleasant town of Ville-neuve, rang softly in her ear; and gliding down the Rhone, with his small white sail extended to the balmy breeze, the fisherman had begun his plaintive hymn to the Virgin.

“Bright sun! sweet scene!” sighed the maiden; “whatever be the sorrows of mortals, Nature still rejoices; her beauty remains the same.”

She stooped, and plucked a flower, which though bearing in Provence a different name,

corresponded in its kind, and imagined virtues, with our heart's-ease.

“ Little flower !” she said ; “ are the tales told by the poets respecting thee, true ? canst thou indeed give peace to the throbbing bosom ? canst thou reconcile us to the loss of all our hearts hold dear ? if so, let me wear thee ; for never did human being need thy blessings more than myself. Yet I would not that Lethe should roll over the past : I would not forget him—forget ! never can I do that ; let sorrow consume my heart, let madness threaten its victim, still, Courtenay, my thoughts will be with thee in thy cold grave.”

Amalia wept—wept long and passionately ; but sorrow will, by very indulgence, exhaust itself. Leaning back on the seat, her tears at length ceased to flow, and a mournful tranquillity stole upon her. Evening was deepening ; the bells of Villeneuve had died away, and the murmuring of the Rhone, in the quietness which prevailed, was heard more distinctly. Lulled

by the soft sounds, and wearied by her own reflections, the senses of Amalia gradually became deadened ; she closed her eyes and yielded to placid slumber.

The girl continued long in this situation, and Louis and Joanna being occupied in the palace with one of the agents of the Pontiff, did not discover her absence. The stars were now gemming the heavens, and the moon had arisen high and clear.

The lofty wall which protected the palace, surrounded the garden likewise on every side, except where it fronted the Rhone ; a low palisade was continued in that place, and thus the beauty of the scene was not excluded. The bank which sloped to the water was precipitous, but a flight of narrow steps had been formed for the convenience of those who wished to embark on the river. Gliding cautiously along, within the shadow of some trees, the outer branches of which, bending down, almost kissed the waters, a skiff was approaching this landing place. It

contained two individuals, a boy, and a person of mature age, who by his garb might instantly have been identified with one of those wandering musicians of the time, called *troubadours*. A cap with a heron's feather dropping on one side, adorned his head; a silk mask was drawn over his face; his doublet of Venetian tissue, was bound by a yellow girdle; his buskins also were of yellow leather; and his guitar, companion of his travels and soother of his lonely moods, was hung around his neck.

The noble art of *jonglerie*, at the period of which we write, was fast on the decline: the poetical age of Provence, with Pierre Vidal, Geoffrey Rudel, and Raimond Berenger, had departed. Yet a few professors of the *gaie science* still wandered from town to town, and from palace to palace, bewailing in the *Sirvente* the dying spirit of romance and song.

The skiff, bearing the musician and boy, reached the landing-place; and the former, having given directions to the youth to paddle the

boat back beneath the trees, and instantly to advance if called, sprang up the steps. Favoured by the dimness, he entered the palace garden ; indeed, had he been noticed, he would not have been molested, for the art which he professed was a sufficient passport to the houses of the high and noble.

Whatever the minstrel's purpose might have been, he cautiously advanced, and paused among the trees in the garden. His eye wandered from turret to turret, as if he were uncertain which the lady of his heart occupied ; and then seizing his guitar, he began a low and pathetic *canzon*. Whether the object of his poetic adoration were Queen Joanna, Amalia, or one of the ladies of honour, it did not appear ; vain, however, was his lay, for no light beamed forth, no lattice opened.

The disappointed musician wandered down one of the green alleys, apparently at a loss what measure to adopt.

“ Shall I not behold her ? ” he whispered ;

“ does she not remember my song ? alas for him who shall stake his happiness on the changeful love of woman !”

Unheedingly he approached the bower where Amalia slumbered : her white drapery caught his eye, and he started back. She was the lady, perhaps, whom he loved ; or, at least she might give him information regarding her. Breathlessly he bent over the slumbering girl ; he dared not awake her ; his tall and athletic frame trembled with emotion ; but unable longer to support his curiosity, or eagerness, he touched her, and she awoke.

“ Whom do I behold ? Heaven protect me ! is it night ?”

She hastily arose, and was quitting the arbour, when the musician dropped on his knee before her, and detained her by grasping her mantle.

“ Ha !” she cried, “ who art thou ? what means this audacity ? thy profession will scarcely excuse thee !”

The minstrel still evinced extreme agitation, for the moon now shone full upon the face of Amalia. He could with difficulty articulate; but, in a faltering manner, begged her to pardon him, and stated that he had something of great moment to communicate.

The girl was impatient; she observed not his mask; she scarcely glanced at him.

“ Something to communicate to me? minstrel, I forgive thee, depart. Thy soft *canzons*, thy love lays, charm me not; and if thou art the bearer of billets from any Provençal cavalier, return to thy master, and inform him I cannot receive them.”

The musician still held her garment; “ Oh! one moment stay!” he passionately exclaimed, though his voice seemed forced and unnatural; “ if ever thou didst love, grant me a hearing!”

“ If ever?” cried Amalia; “ but what is that to thee? must I unfold to a wandering stranger—poor minstrel, accept this largess, and depart.”

“ I have to tell thee,” he continued, returning

her purse into her hand—"I have to tell thee a tale respecting him who perished off Nice—I mean one Courtenay, an English soldier."

That name acted like the wand of a magician upon the hearer; her eyes filled with light, and she exclaimed breathlessly:

"Respecting him? ah! what dost thou mean? how shouldst thou know that I—but haste! haste! good stranger, for the love of Heaven!"

The minstrel made a sign for her to seat herself; he bade her not be astonished, and prayed her to utter no exclamation.—He dropped his silken mask!—was it the shade of him the haunter of her dreams, that stood before her?—no, in breathing life, in warm reality, it was the lost, the beloved—Walter Courtenay!

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNEXPECTED MEETING.

“ Oh ! thou whose mortal race I deemed was o'er,
Thy love, thy hopes, thy sorrows all at rest ;
Do I behold thy long-loved face once more,
And do I lean upon thy faithful breast ! ”

THERE are moments, when the most reserved and scrupulous of women yield to the intensity of their feelings ; and when they perform that which, in a dispassionate hour, they might imagine reprehensible. Thus Amalia, lost, overcome with rapture and amazement, sank into Courtenay's arms. It was the first time that she had betrayed to him so unequivocally the secret of her heart ; but was it for reserve to raise its icy barrier now ? could she in coy

pride repel him whom she thought to have been numbered with the dead?—no, no, they both yielded to the wild delight which such a meeting was calculated to inspire. They spoke not; but sighs and tears, love's eloquent language, were theirs. They felt how unspeakably dear they were to each other, and that earth, in its wide bounds, had nothing to offer as an equivalent for that love, which lived and burned in their beating and entranced hearts.

The first excitement of the interview being over, Courtenay placed Amalia on the rustic seat; she was all curiosity and eagerness to learn his story, which must needs, she thought, be replete with marvels.

We shall not give at length Courtenay's narration, or attempt to describe Amalia's intense interest and sympathy, as the soldier spoke of his perils and sufferings; it will be sufficient that we briefly state the particulars.

When Courtenay had been left behind, a hapless tenant of the wreck, though conceiving

it almost impossible by swimming to reach the distant shore, the instinctive desire of life was not quenched by despair : accordingly, when the galley went to pieces, he had contrived to lash himself to one of the broken masts, and boldly committed himself to the raging element. Borne upon mountain waves, he knew not in what direction, for some time he struggled with his fate ; but meeting with a fragment of the wreck, it dashed against him with such violence, that he was deprived of his senses. When consciousness returned, he found himself in the boat of some Corsican fishermen ; they had seen him floating on the waves, supported by the mast to which he had been attached ; and they had employed the means usually resorted to for the recovery of persons apparently drowned. They rowed him to their island coast, and bore him to their cottage ; but in consequence of extreme exhaustion, and the injury which he had received, he was shortly seized with a delirious fever. The malady lasted a considerable time, but at

the expiration of some weeks, he dispatched an Islander to Nice, in order to acquaint the Prince and Queen of his situation. The Corsican, however, owing to an accident which befel him on his passage, had been unable to execute the commission entrusted to him.

Courtenay, still too much indisposed to bear removal, had imagined the silence of the royal parties to arise from indifference as to his fate. But when he heard that the body of one of his unfortunate troopers had been mistaken for his own, and pompously buried in the cathedral of Nice, and that the citizens, at the request of Louis and Joanna, had even begun to erect a pillar to his memory, every idea of their ingratitude vanished ; and while he smiled at their error, he felt flattered by their kindness, and the high honour which they intended him.

When the English soldier landed at Nice, he found that the Neapolitan Court had quitted for Avignon. Accordingly he hastened to the latter place, and already he had been several days in

the city, habited as we have beheld him, in the garb of a wandering musician.

“ But wherefore this disguise ?” inquired Amalia ; “ why not reveal yourself immediately to Louis and Joanna ?”

Courtenay informed her that his object for remaining incognito had been to ascertain whether her sentiments regarding him continued unaltered ; for if he had found that she manifested no interest in his fate, when, as a stranger, he alluded to the shipwreck, or that she favoured the addresses of another, he had intended never to have divulged his identity to his former friends, but to have departed for ever, permitting them to suppose that his remains indeed mouldered in the cathedral of Nice. “ But, Princess Amalia,” he said in a dejected tone, “ even now if I discover myself to Queen Joanna and her husband, little pleasure will their thanks afford me ; little will avail the honours which they may heap upon me, if I am to be denied thy hand. Were I to be created first duke in Naples, I

should envy the lot of the humblest peasant, blessed with the object of his love."

Amalia was aware of the severe notions entertained by Courtenay, and of the high independence, amounting to haughtiness, that distinguished his character. She knew that he performed valiant deeds more on account of the pleasure experienced in the actions themselves, than for any advantage which he might derive from them. She could not, however, but think that he held wealth and honours in too great contempt.

"Courtenay," she said; "let us not touch the chord of our old sorrows. Though my brother and the Queen may never consent to our union, do not reject any office of distinction to which they may desire to appoint you. I confess I wish you to remain in our land: you will then be near me; and oh! may not deep, pure affection exist, governed by the rules of that system which the Poet Petrarch has so beautifully enlarged on, and which he styles the system of Plato?"

The soldier smiled : Petrarch's opinions, his finely-spun theory of love, which is to be kindled by emanations of mind, and to be kept alive by the aid of memory, or, at most, an occasional view of the adored object, did by no means accord with his notions ; in a word, he was not a man to be satisfied with idealities. " And would such a mode of love be sufficient for thee ?" he said ; " ah ! Amalia, I am no poet, and therefore cannot, like Petrarch, console myself, or give vent to my unfortunate passion, by singing amorous ditties.—No, no, platonism may be suited to the temperament of scholars, and the enthusiastic votaries of the muses ; but it is repugnant to the feelings of the soldier ! my own Amalia, let us discard such a system ; our happiness shall have a more substantial foundation ; the blessed ties of the church shall yet unite us."

" Nay, Courtenay ;" answered the girl ; " thou dost speak with too much confidence ; the prospect before us appears to me dark and without hope."

“ Now, by the Madonna, I will not wrong thee by doubting thy love; my heart is full of gratitude for the honour thou conferest upon me; yet might I propose even now—” he checked himself, and seemed thoughtful.

“ Proceed, Courtenay—what wouldst thou propose ?”

“ Another than myself would say—there floats my skiff; yonder flows the Rhone; darkness favours—the world is before us—”

“ What dost thou mean ? ha ! I understand thee ; never, never !—imprudent that I am to remain here.—I leave thee this moment !”

Courtenay perceived by the indignation flashing in the lady's eye, that he had said too much, and that Amalia would never consent to fly clandestinely with him. Moreover, he was aware that such conduct on his part would be the last degree of baseness to Louis and Joanna; after a moment's reflection, therefore, he abandoned all thoughts of the measure.

“ Stay, Amalia ! pardon me !” he cried,

springing towards her ; “ my wild love prompted me to say that which my principles utterly condemn. I will never act the traitorous disloyal knight ; I will never urge thee to a step which might be the means of embittering thy after existence. No, I will win thee by fair conduct, and with open hand, or I will resign thee, and my happiness for ever.”

Amalia was pacified, and the mild glance which she cast upon her lover, plainly intimated that he was forgiven.

“ But hear my determination ;” continued Courtenay ; “ I will now cast off this disguise, and appear before the Prince and Queen ; but I will forbear urging my suit for thy hand, until the approaching trial be over ; the happy result, for I doubt not that their innocence will be made evident to the world, may dispose their hearts to listen to my prayer. But if they still refuse their consent to our union ; if the barrier of rank must still divide us ; then, Amalia,—nay, I utter no threat ; turn not pale, dear love—let us not despond

while one ray beams from the sweet planet of hope."

The lovers were in the act of separating, when they imagined they heard approaching footsteps; Courtenay grasped the poniard which he wore beneath his doublet; but the alarm was groundless; the sound was occasioned by the dash of a wave against the bank beneath. The moon shone bright and still on the garden beds around; the stars were mirrored in the fountains, and the night-dews hung sparkling on every shrub and flower.

"Farewell!" cried Courtenay, embracing the trembling girl; "I will never cease to think of thee, to adore thee—I will never resign thee but with life!"

"Be discreet;" said Amalia, hiding her face on his bosom; "thou hast the secret of my heart, that it loves only thee, and I feel, I feel thou wilt not wantonly cause it wretchedness."

CHAPTER VII.

THE USURPER.

Believe me, you are marvellously changed.

Merchant of Venice.

WHILE such was the course of events in Provence, the Hungarian monarch had fully established himself in the sovereignty of Naples. Yet like all usurpers, he felt his power to be precarious, and his throne unstable; he became suspicious of every one around him, and mistrust and choler urged him to a continuance of those acts of tyranny and blood, which had marked his progress into the kingdom. Every man who looked grave, he imagined was discontented, and meditated treason; and every person who laughed, mocked his alleged right to the crown,

and derided his authority. Whoever did not cry ' Long live the King !' favoured Joanna's cause ; and whoever seemed particularly anxious to please him, only played the part of a spy, and sought an opportunity to overthrow his government, or take his life.

Such was the unenviable situation of the royal Hungarian ; but the person who principally excited his jealousy, as well as his fear, was the Duke of Durazzo. We have shewn in another place, that an ancient and unforgotten feud embittered the spirits of these men. The very talents and military skill which Durazzo had recently exhibited, served not a little to increase the envy and hatred fostered by his rival. Both had their schemes and projects as regarded each other. The monarch had suffered Durazzo to head his army, and subjugate Naples : and thus, having availed himself of his abilities, and used him as his tool, he designed to cast him from him, and effect his ruin. Durazzo, on his part, had only invited the Hungarian into the kingdom,

with a view to crush the power of Joanna, which he himself had failed in endeavouring to overthrow ; and being fully aware of the tyrannical disposition of the usurper, he secretly purposed, on the first favourable opportunity, to incite the oppressed people to an insurrection, and thus the downfall of each party being complete, he intended to seize the reins of government, and, with his wife Maria, mount the throne.

It is to Durazzo, whose career of ambition and tortuous intrigue, has nearly reached its final goal, that we must in this place direct our attention.

His friend Minervino was no more ; that nobleman had died of wounds received during the assault upon the city of Naples. Minervino he had held in much higher esteem than his fellow conspirator Charles Artus : indeed, the former, however criminal his actions, had possessed a brave heart, and in his fidelity to those with whom he was in league, the most implicit confidence might have been placed. Durazzo

deeply mourned his loss, and he seemed now to stand alone, for Artus, ever vacillating and timid, he felt was no meet companion for him, and little adapted to second his projects of ambition, and deeds of daring.

Durazzo, at this juncture, reminded the king of the promise which he had made, previously to the subjugation of Naples: it was that the Duke should be created viceroy, holding the kingdom in fealty under him. The Hungarian stated his intention of fulfilling the condition, and of retiring for awhile beyond the Alps; consequently Durazzo might expect very shortly to be invested with the important office that would raise him above his peers, and which, he considered, was only one remove from the throne itself.

Yet Durazzo's spirit was sad; there is a time when the evil will pause in crime, and when the voice of conscience will no longer be stifled, but call from the depths of the soul. A cloud seemed to overshadow him; he was shaken with

presentiments of approaching misfortune ; and when he thought of his wife and child, whom, in spite of his iron nature, he loved with deep affection ; when he considered what their destiny might be, if the storm should overtake him, and the sun of his life go down in darkness, he was full of disquietude, and his heart was supremely wretched.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUKE AND THE SAGE.

And written on that brow, the wrath of fate
Tells of a ruined mind, a heart all desolate.

Elhior's Poem.

IN an early portion of our narrative, we had occasion to introduce an Astrologer named Florelli; and with this man Durazzo, whose spirit was tinctured with the credulity of his age, had been in the habit of holding frequent communication.

The philosopher was now stationed in the open air on the summit of his observatory. His white head was uncovered; the moon was shining on his broad zodiacal belt, and his glittering Persian robe: his hand traced cabalistic figures, and his eye, beaming with thoughts 'too deep for words,'

wandered from star to star. He was not a hypocrite, he was not a charlatan, for he firmly believed in the deep mysteries of that science which seemed to its disciples so sublime, and holy.

At a short distance from Florelli, his head drooping on his breast, and his palm covering his eyes, stood Durazzo. His dark and tall figure was motionless, and saving that his foot at times slightly beat the granite beneath him, he seemed without sensation, without life. Ah! who might scan the secrets of that bosom, and bare to view the desert which scathing, blasting passions had made there! who might read the lines—the lines of fire which remorse had graven on his heart! he was stricken by the lightning which conscience draws from the clouds of crime-burdened memory! and there he stood, in spite of present honours, and anticipated greatness, an embodying of woe and despair.

Deep silence had prevailed for some time, when Florelli, suspending his astral observations,

looked earnestly at the Duke. He entertained a sincere regard for Durazzo, and being unacquainted with the real magnitude of his misdeeds, he took an unfeigned interest both in his public successes, and his private welfare. It was therefore with feelings of no small concern, that he regarded the unusual demeanour of his noble client.

“ My lord Duke,” exclaimed the sage, “ hath evil befallen thee ?—thine eye is sad, thy cheek is pale.—In what may I serve thee ?”

“ My mind is ill at ease, or I had not visited thee to-night. I believe thee my friend, although in this world I may possess no other.”

“ Speak not so, your Grace ; among the high and mighty of this land, you have many friends, and each more powerful than the poor and solitary student of Cumæ.”

Durazzo faintly smiled, and spoke in a low tone :

“ Since thy science enables thee to lift the veil of future time, canst thou, old man, read the

thoughts that pass in men's hearts? knowest thou an antidote for mental torture? or how the soul may steel herself against the ills of life, and scare away horrid remembrances that, like a troop of spectres, haunt her day and night?"

The Astrologer sighed, and confessed that his art pretended not to exercise power over the human passions or will; but probably long experience might enable him to offer advice on the subject of Durazzo's present fears, or sorrows.

"Fear! sorrow! such things, Florelli, were never known to me until this hour. Fear? pshaw! I know it not now—but torture I have—it prostrates my energies—it sears my brain; greater misery than mine, fiends cannot endure in the pit of perdition."

He struck his brow, and walked perturbedly to and fro. The astrologer's eye followed him, half in terror, half in amazement.

"Does your Grace suspect treachery? or dost thou imagine that secret enemies have combined against thee?"

Durazzo gazed stedfastly on Florelli, until his shaggy brows met over his flashing eyes. The Astrologer shrank, and cowered beneath the scrutiny.

“ Fear not, old man, I intend thee no harm ; I am calm now. Florelli, it is weakness in me to regard visions, or omens ; but I have had a dream that disturbs me ; and I have a presentiment that this hand—this crimsoned hand which has sent so many to the grave before me, will soon be stricken by death.”

The low, but thrilling tone in which these words were spoken, sank into the heart of the listener.

“ Men imagine,” continued Durazzo, “ that I am to be Viceroy of Naples ; aye, hereafter, should the Hungarian monarch die without issue, that I shall be king. But death is the thwarter of all human hopes and designs ; and if the thread of my existence be nearly spun ; if for empire I must receive the narrow chambers of the tomb, and for subjects, be surrounded by

creeping worms, well may my spirit be troubled; and if there is a place of retribution for condemned souls, well may I feel already the torments of Hell."

"Nay, your Grace, dismiss such gloomy thoughts. Those whom thou hast slain, thou hast slain, like other warriors, in battle; and so far from death being near, I consider thy prospects never to have been more bright than they are at present. I have deeply studied, and long watched the star of thy destiny; therefore my opinion is entitled to some weight."

"I grant it, Florelli; I would not believe thy art jugglery, nor thy prophecies a tissue of falsehoods; therefore I would fain know whether thou hast discovered any change in the appearance of my planet?"

The Astrologer assured Durazzo that he had pleasing intelligence to communicate to him: his planet, Jupiter, had entered into opposition with Mars; this indicated a struggle between him and some powerful monarch; but Mars had

already retrograded two degrees—a certain assurance of triumph on Durazzo's part.

“ Yes, my lord Duke, thou and I know each other, and can keep our counsel. The prophecies, too, in these Sibylline volumes, which we have consulted on former occasions, I can now confidently assert bear reference to thyself. Thou art to be a conqueror of nations! the master spirit of the age!”

“ Now could I give credence to all thou dost utter, clouds no longer should darken my brow; I would smile away in scorn these gloomy forebodings—these fears that unman and shake my soul.—I the conqueror! the mighty one! the trampler on the necks of kings! well, well, if it should be so, thou also, Florelli, shalt be raised above thy fellows, and enjoy more wealth than thy imagination has power to conceive.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE TREACHEROUS FRIEND.

“ And doth the serpent, falsehood, hide beneath ?
That snake mid flowers, whose touch is doom and death.”

Elliot of Sheffield.

IN a private apartment of his residence situated in the Strada di Toledo, the ex-chamberlain Artus was ruminating on his peculiar situation and prospects, as dependent on his connexion with Durazzo : the latter had just left the house, having cautioned Artus to great discretion, and urged upon him the necessity of prompt and vigorous measures. In short, the insurrection had been fully determined on, and the necessary steps were to be taken immediately that Durazzo should have been established in his office as Viceroy.

The Duke, although he entertained a mean opinion of the ability and courage of Artus, considered him faithful to his cause, being attached to him, as he conceived, by every tie which interest might create, as well as by every solemn and awful oath, by which man can bind himself to man. Durazzo, however, in his estimate of the chamberlain's character, had committed an error, and this the sequel will prove.

Artus, having made a few rapid strides through his apartment, abruptly stopped, and struck his clenched hand on the table, like a man who, after holding a long debate on some subject, has arrived at a conclusion at last. He then drew from a secret drawer in his cabinet, a scroll of parchment, and, throwing himself into a chair, hastily glanced at the contents, and laughed with that peculiar mockery and bitterness, which a fiend may be supposed to indulge in over a human being whom he has deceived, and intends to undo.

“Thank the fates! Minervino is dead;” he

whispered ; “ I dared not think of such a measure had our old associate been alive.—Money and revenge ! aha ! which is the sweetest ? by the mass, I know not ; but I will possess myself of both.”

In truth, Artus was convinced that the honours and wealth promised by Durazzo, being entirely dependent on the success of his designs, were of a somewhat doubtful nature ; while a continued adherence to the Duke would of necessity be attended with extreme danger : on the other hand, the Hungarian King, whose hatred to Durazzo the chamberlain well knew, was the present lord and master, and had posts of distinction, and money at his immediate command ; he was therefore resolved, without implicating himself in the Duke’s criminality, to sell his friend and leader into the hands of the implacable monarch.

“ He has called me a coward ; he has more than once drawn his sword on me ; I’ll cancel old debts now ! by the holy rood ! I’ll have his life-blood !—let me consider—this paper which

I have secured, is addressed to Minervino, and bears Durazzo's signature; it is a plain correspondence relative to the assassination of Andrea, while I myself am not even alluded to therein. Yes, it exactly suits my purpose. Then for his design of inciting the people to a revolt, and of overthrowing the government—I'll make my terms with the sovereign, and divulge all!—ten thousand florins, and revenge! ha! ha! ha!”

Artus thrust the document into his vest, and again, as if to signify the fullness of his resolution, struck the table with his hand; he threw back the snake-like locks from his flushed brow, and his small eyes sparkling like fire, he still muttered between his ground teeth; “I'll have his life-blood—ten thousand florins, and revenge!”

CHAPTER X.

THE KING'S PROJECT.

It is concluded—Banquo, thy soul's flight,
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night,

Macbeth.

It was a bright jocund morning, when a gay cavalcade issued from the gates of Naples. The company was composed of a large number of Hungarian knights, Italian nobles, and officers of the crown. In the centre rode the King, appareled in a rich but light costume; his attendants, also, were dressed like men bound on an excursion of pleasure, rather than a military expedition.

They had proceeded a short distance on the Strada Capuana, when they were joined by a large pack of dogs led by the royal huntsmen; to be brief, the monarch had invited his cour-

tiers that day to hunt with him in the woods of Nola, renowned at that period for being the haunt of wild boars.

The party seemed to be excited by the buoyant animal spirits which the anticipation of sport naturally produces; yet unwonted thought sat on the brow of the Hungarian king; Charles Artus rode near his person, and it was observed that he addressed the ex-chamberlain frequently, speaking in low confidential tones.

Durazzo, at a short distance, reined his steed amidst a group of Italian nobles; the spell of gloom, which we recently observed upon him, appeared to have passed away, for he conversed cheerfully with his associates, who paid him marked deference, inasmuch as they considered him on the point of assuming the high office of Viceroy of Naples.

The cavalcade had reached that portion of the highway whence branched to the right and left two roads, one of which conducted to the woods of Nola, and the other to the town of Aversa.

At the command of the King the party halted, and the royal Hungarian spoke as follows :

“ Fair friends, ere we disport ourselves in the chase, it is our wish to pay a visit to Aversa, even unto the Celestine Convent, where our beloved and lamented brother, Prince Andrea, (God rest his soul!) met with his untimely end.”

All marvelled what the monarch's object could be in visiting, at such a time, that fatal and ominous spot. From his implacable disposition, it might be conceived that he meditated a fearful punishment upon some parties connected with the assassination of his Brother. Many had already suffered death, on a supposition of guilt ; but who now among their distinguished company could incur the monarch's suspicions, it was indeed impossible to divine.

They proceeded to Aversa, and in a short time entered the spacious Celestine Gardens. The peaceful monks issued from their Convent to greet and welcome their illustrious visitors.

But the king, taking little notice of their 'benedicites,' or their genuflexions, passed on to the monastery. Artus, with a recklessness ill suited to the time and place, glanced at the fatal balcony, from which Andrea had been dropped into the garden beneath. Durazzo raised not his eyes; his outward bearing was calm; within, within, was the storm, the struggle, the consuming fire; yet he entertained no feeling of dread or apprehension, as regarded the monarch near him; for he considered him rather as *his* victim.

The King of Naples and Hungary now entered the Convent bare-headed; with real or feigned sorrow depicted on his countenance, he paced the ancient hall of the old Norman pile, and, ever and anon, sighed the name of his unhappy brother Andrea. He ascended the wide stone stairs which led to the upper portion of the building, and at his command, all followed. They passed through several apartments, walked by the balcony before alluded to, and at length

reached the fatal gallery in which Prince Andrea had been strangled.

On the left side, behind the memorable pillars, a door opened into a spacious room; the monarch entered, and, in deep silence, formed the knights and nobles into a large circle. Advancing into this circle, he drew his sword; his late meditative demeanour suddenly passed away, and his countenance assumed a dark and menacing expression: lifting his unsheathed weapon, he cried with a loud voice:

“Subjects! vassals! know all in our presence, wherefore we have visited this Convent at Aversa!—our object, God willing, is to punish a foul traitor who stands even among ye!”

The courtiers, in utter surprise, looked from one to the other, and a shudder ran through many of the listeners.

“This traitor, we have full evidence, and clear proof to show, leagued with that adulterous woman, commonly styled Queen of Naples, and with her paramour, the lord Louis of Taranto,

to slay and destroy my dear brother Andrea: it is fitting, therefore, and a wholesome retribution, that in this spot where the victim fell, the assassin should likewise perish."

"The will of God be done!" solemnly exclaimed a priest of the Convent, who stood with a cross in his hand near the king.

"Moreover, this wretched man," continued the monarch, "has since intended, so we can prove by undoubted testimony, to pluck the crown from our head; and by raising a rebellion in our now peaceful and loyal kingdom, to establish himself upon the throne of Naples. Therefore, subjects! vassals! we call upon you, we command you, that when, with our sword, we touch the shoulder of him the disguised regicide and traitor now present, ye instantly seize, and drag him into the centre of the circle, and punish him with the death which he so richly merits."

There was a dreadful pause. The wand of fate was to fall upon one—who it might be, few indeed could conjecture. No foot stirred;

scarcely a breath was drawn ; and all eyes were fixed upon the King, the dispenser of life or death !

The monarch advanced ; he proceeded from one to the other—his glance encountered that of Artus, but he touched not him : he raised the fatal sword, and it rested upon the shoulder of—Durazzo !

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOOM.

" Pallida mors sequo
Pulsat pede,
Pauperum tabernas,
Regumque turres."

Horace.

" **WHAT** means this?" exclaimed Durazzo, starting back from the king: " your highness labours under some horrible mistake." He drew his sword, and struck the first officer who approached him to the ground; but in a minute he was overpowered; his hands were forced behind his back, and he was dragged forwards into the centre of the circle.

The King of Hungary, notwithstanding that the document which the perfidious Artus had

placed into his hands, was of a somewhat ambiguous nature, fully believed Durazzo guilty of the murder of his brother. The accusation, indeed, afforded him the best possible plea for sweeping from his path a man whose power and intrigues he dreaded; at the same time, the ends of justice were answered, although the guilty was to suffer punishment by the hand of a villain.

“ I a regicide ! what are the proofs against me ? ” cried the infuriated Duke.

“ We have proofs in our possession sufficient for thy condemnation ; ” exclaimed the King. “ Nobles, and knights ! behold this document ! ”

The letter addressed by Durazzo to his late friend Count Minervino, was passed from one to the other ; and though its contents might not have carried a conviction of Durazzo's guilt to an unprejudiced mind, they were considered by those who feared to think differently from the tyrant, sufficiently explicit to criminate the writer, whose well-known signature the paper bore.

Durazzo was startled ; he was utterly at a loss to imagine how the Hungarian had possessed himself of the only letter which he remembered to have addressed Minervino on the subject of Andrea's assassination.

“ My lord, the king ! ” he cried, struggling violently with those who held him ; “ this treatment of a member of the house of Anjou, is not to be supported. Unhand me, varlets ! slaves !—that document, as a witness against me, is utterly invalid, and will prove nothing—I claim the right of a trial ! ”

“ Ha ! ha ! and a trial thou shalt have before thy king, and these honourable signiors : howbeit, it shall be a summary one. Sir Duke, thou dost stand charged—first, with having abetted and assisted the deceased Minervino, and the woman Joanna, in the foul murder of my late lamented brother—nobles ! how say ye ? is the Duke guilty or innocent ? ”

The creatures of the despot unhesitatingly answered—“ Guilty ! ”

" False King! law-contemning usurper!" exclaimed Durazzo, unable to restrain his bursting indignation; **" am I then doomed to perish thus? without even the privilege of challenging my calumniator? to die like a dog!—have I no friend in all this company?"** and he looked around on the spectators, but no one moved, no one spoke in his behalf: his eye rested on Artus, and that caitiff turned away his head, looking, as if for directions, towards the royal Hungarian; yet Durazzo harboured no thought of betraying his friend and colleague; he would die, but, guilty as he was, he could not stoop to the meanness, the littleness of soul, which the betrayal of an accomplice must ever indicate.

" Duke! our next charge touches thy loyalty to ourselves. We had purposed making thee Viceroy of Naples, when lo! even before we quit the kingdom, we have discovered through the means of a faithful servant, that thou hast hatched a plot to raise a rebellion, overturn our government, and seize the crown and sceptre!"

“ Who is my accuser !” exclaimed the astonished Durazzo : “ by Heaven ! confront me with him, that I may pluck out his lying tongue, and his craven heart !”

“ I am thy accuser !” cried a man among the crowd ; and Artus pressing forwards, stood within the circle. “ Duke of Durazzo ! thou traitor to thy king and country ! I am thy accuser !”

For a moment Durazzo was unmanned ; for a moment the blood rushed back upon his heart ; his limbs shook, and his face was white as ashes. The unexpected perfidy, the unparalleled falsehood of him in whom he had reposed his trust, came upon him with a shock that might well overwhelm him with astonishment, and crush his spirit.—‘ *Tu quoque Brute !*’ cried the Conqueror of Gaul, when he recognised his friend among his assassins ; and feelings somewhat analogous to those which the Roman experienced, now burned in the bosom, and, for a brief time, prostrated the energies of the unhappy Durazzo.

Yet he raised his head at length ; no expressions of wrath fell from his lips, but he cast on Artus a look of deep unutterable reproach ; of sadness which had no words—a look which impressed itself upon the coward's brain, as if each beam of that eye were a searing brand of fire—a look he remembered to his dying day !

The king, observing the trepidation which Artus was gradually betraying, and only anxious to rid himself of his dangerous rival with some shew of justice on his part, conceived it politic, after a few additional statements had been made, to inflict upon his enemy the punishment he designed him. Accordingly, a sign being given to some of his officers, the unarmed Duke received his death-blow, and fell, mortally wounded, in the centre of the circle.

Durazzo finding that all was over, and that whatever he might urge, would avail him nothing now ; that his dreams of glory, and his visions of empire, had vanished, like foam on the wave, for ever, collected his energies to wrestle with

the last tyrant of humanity, and to die as he had lived, unconfessing fear. His wound did not immediately prove fatal, and the heartless king, with a view to gloat on his sufferings, ordered that no second blow should be dealt him.

He leant on the floor, supporting himself on his elbow ; he did not rave beneath the pain of his wound, but exhibited a stern collectedness, a ferocious hardihood. His eye was fixed on the boards crimsoned with his own blood ; his teeth were set ; he seemed wrapped in thought ; then lifting his clenched hand, he shook it in a menacing manner at the king.

“ Tyrant ! usurper ! and coward ! thus to have condemned me without a hearing ; thus to have murdered me !—Oh, for power to spring at thee ! could I kill thee with curses, thou shouldst share my fate. Now that I am departing to the land of silence whence there is no return, I will confess that I did mean to make thee my tool ; that I ever detested thee with a loathing, a soul-engrossing hatred ; that I did intend trampling

on thee, reptile as thou art!—but fate is against me, and thou wilt survive thy foe. Receive then his dying curse—‘whether thou dost sleep or wake, may my shade haunt and blast thee! may thy crown be of thorns, aye, girt by snakes of fire piercing thy brain with the pangs of a tortured memory! and when thy death-hour comes, may thy yet living eyes behold the fiends hovering about thy pillow, waiting in horrible glee, to drag thy soul down—down to the bottomless abyss.’”

The King, who had heard his enemy out with extreme impatience, laughed savagely :

“ Miserable and unhappy traitor ! we despise him too entirely to notice his insane and powerless maledictions. Let the priest of the Convent attend, and shrive the blasphemer.” Saying which, he turned on his heel, and walked away, followed by some of his courtiers.

A momentary faintness oppressed Durazzo, but shortly rallying, he gazed upon the group which still surrounded him ; there was a sof-

tened, an almost imploring expression in his eyes: yet he uttered no word; his cogitations, whatever their nature, seemed wandering from himself, his fate, and the scene around; and in that deep trance, the priest who held the cross before him, beseeching him to confess his sins, was totally unregarded. Yes, his thoughts were now with his young, his loved, his gentle wife—the only being who over his harsh and gloomy nature, had the power to throw the spell of softness. He mused on her unprotected situation, and what her anguish would be when she learned the fate of her wretched husband: and there he leant on his arm; his breast heaved with stifled emotion; his head gradually drooped lower and lower; and as he half shaded his face with his mantle, tears, burning tears, were perceived stealing down his cheek.

“ Men! he exclaimed, addressing the bystanders, who regarded him with feelings of curiosity rather than of pity; “ is there one among you all who will convey a token from a

dying husband to his wife ? it is the only favour he begs of mortal man."

He took a small painting from his bosom—the miniature of Maria, and feebly held it towards the crowd of Hungarian and Italian nobles ; but either from a fear of offending the king, or influenced by sentiments of personal animosity, no one would receive into his care the pledge of affection.

Durazzo, seeing his appeal in vain, with a look of inexpressible bitterness, replaced the painting in his vest, and appeared to resign himself to his fate. For a short time he remained motionless, his frame gradually yielding to the faintness which heralds death, when a shriek was heard at the extremity of the gallery ; it was a cry not of alarm, but of intense concentrated agony. The voice, as if recognized, and understood by the dying man, seemed to pierce his brain ; his features, growing blank and dull, were suddenly excited, and light flashed back to his fading eye. In another minute, a woman

appeared at the entrance of the apartment, and bursting away from the females who endeavoured to restrain her, she passed through the group of nobles, and with veil thrown back, tresses unbound, and eyes strained in search of some object, stood within the fatal circle.

Durazzo beheld her; he strove, but was unable to rise—"My wife! my wife!" he cried convulsively; and the faithful, the agonized Maria sank into his death-stricken arms.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WIFE'S PARTING.

—— whose love and life together fled,
Have left me here to love and live in vain.

Childe Harold.

To account for the sudden appearance of the Duchess of Durazzo, we need only remind the reader that the villa where she resided, was situated but a short distance from Aversa ; in addition to which we may add, that one of the lay brothers, attached to the Celestine Convent, and who had formerly been in her service, on hearing of the fate of the Duke, had immediately hurried to apprise her of the appalling event.

The fond wife perceived that there was no hope ; her betrayed husband was doomed, by the command of an inhuman tyrant, slowly to bleed

to death. None could save him, and none even dared to express sympathy with his sufferings; and there she sat on the floor—the floor purpled with his gushing blood—supporting his languid head. The rude eyes of callous-hearted men were on her; but nothing now to her was dignity, and the woman's timorous feelings had departed. The group, the scene, the Hungarian tyrant, were all unheeded and unthought of. She only saw her suffering husband, who, although he might be hated by others, was the dearest object earth contained for her; she only heard his murmured voice, and looked into those deep eyes no longer burning with indignation, or flashing defiance, but turned imploringly upon her, and beaming with an expression of unutterable fondness.

“Maria,” said Durazzo, taking her hand in his, “the dream is over—the die has been cast against me; the crown for which I struggled will never grace thy brow; I leave thee for the dark and narrow bed of sleep—the repose which

knows no breaking. Yet, ere I depart, say, say thou dost forgive me for the countless woes, the tears, which I have occasioned thee!"

A convulsive sob from Maria—a wild clasping of his neck, was the only answer she could return.

"Think of thy God, and repent of thy crimes!" exclaimed the Priest, as he held the cross before the expiring man; but Durazzo waved his hand impatiently.

"Father, I do not blame thee for thy zeal, but disturb me not now, I beseech thee; my last moments must be given to one whom I regard even beyond the salvation of my soul. Listen, holy father! hear my dying asseveration, and repeat it to my murderer, and thy tyrant king! This woman is innocent of the crime, if crime it be, which I have acknowledged, and which I glory in still—the crime of aspiring to the throne of Naples. On her bended knees, countless times, has she entreated me to turn back in my career: let no

injury, therefore, be done unto her. Oh! intercede in her behalf with the monarch, and I will bless thee—even I, the condemned, the murdered, will bless thee!”

“ My son, I will strictly attend to thy request; and, of a surety, thy crimes will not be visited on the head of an innocent lady, if such the Duchess be. But oh, listen to my prayer! confess thyself penitent, and make thy peace with Heaven!”

Durazzo's strength was fast departing; his head drooped, and at length sank upon the bosom of his wife; yet still his hand strained hers, and still his glazed eye was fixed on the pale agonized countenance which hung over him.

“ Durazzo—my dear husband! dost thou suffer greatly now?” faltered Maria; “ what will become of me when thou art gone? yet can I ask the question? as if I could survive, or live without thee in a world which to me now will be a blank, a desolation.”

“ Nay, dear one—live for—for—”

“ Your child—your son !”

A spasm of feeling choked Durazzo's utterance; but after a few moments, he spoke with difficulty—“ Yes, my sinless boy ! God grant him a destiny less miserable than his father's !—bless him for me ; and teach him, teach him, not to curse his father's name !”

Some of the spectators now, as they witnessed that scene of deep conjugal affection, appeared moved ; and the younger, not yet altogether seared and indurated in heart, shaded their faces with their hands.

“ Durazzo !” and Maria whispered nearer and more earnestly ; **“ tell me, dost thou at last believe in the God who made thee ?—give me some sign, for then we may hope to meet again—we may yet be happy for ever !”**

With a last effort, Durazzo reared his form ; he stretched his arm towards Heaven ; light for a moment broke from his eye, and he murmured, **“ I believe !”** but whether the hope of immortality flashed on his hitherto darkened soul, and

repentance came at the eleventh hour, it is not ours to judge or decide ; the light faded away—the arm dropped, and his head sank on its former resting place—his wife's bosom : once he sighed her name ; once more he feebly embraced her ; and then that spirit which ferocity, cruelty, and ambition, had marked for their own, harbouring no virtue saving the solitary one of affection for his wife and child—the crime-burdened spirit passed away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE AUDIENCE.

“ Are you acquainted with the difference
That holds this present question in the court ? ”

Merchant of Venice.

THE fate of Durazzo, a man who had held so distinguished a position among the magnates of the land, and who had rendered himself so conspicuous in the troublous events of the times, was soon generally known. A few individuals pitied him, but more felt persuaded that he merited his doom.

Queen Joanna was deeply affected, when the intelligence of the death of her royal kinsman reached her at Avignon ; but her chief anxiety and sorrow regarded her sister : she instantly dispatched to Maria letters of condolence, begging

her at once to repair to Provence, and pass her future days near herself and husband. But Maria, although she was not ungrateful for the kindness manifested by the Queen, felt herself bound to the spot where her husband's ashes reposed; she there daily visited his grave; she would sit with her little one, and derive a melancholy pleasure from wreathing flowers around his urn. She wanted no other companion than the memory of the man she had too engrossingly, perhaps sinfully loved. And thus she spent her time, living on recollections of the past, and looking forwards to an union with him whom, she hoped, in spite of all his misdeeds, Heaven at the hour of death had forgiven.

* * * * *

The course of events leads us back to Avignon, for various as uncertain are the destinies which await there our principal characters.

Pope Clement, on whom it will be necessary, in this place, to make a few observations, is described as one of the most refined and liberal

men of his age. Unlike his predecessors, Benedict and John, who had been elevated, from the meanest walks of life, to the chair of St. Peter, he was descended from a noble family. His father was Guillaume Roger, lord of Rosiere; he himself had been created early in life, Prior of Saint Baudille, and distinguishing himself no less by his literary acquirements, than by his deep research in theological matters, he had been subsequently admitted into the sacred college of Cardinals.

Clement had been raised to the Papal throne about six years, when the Prince and Queen of Naples solicited his mediation in their affairs, and called upon him and his Cardinals to proclaim to the world their guilt or innocence. They were not absolutely compelled to have recourse to this trial by the King of Hungary, or any other lord spiritual or temporal; it was self-sought; and hoping, with the confidence that innocence inspires, an acquittal, they wished thus publicly to remove for ever opprobrium from their names.

Clement, impartial and equitable in his proceedings, notwithstanding he had excommunicated the Hungarian Monarch, was willing to hear all which he had to urge against the royal parties; nor should he, if finding Louis and Joanna guilty of the alleged crime, spare them on account of their rank; but, as Lord Paramount of the Christian world, deliver them over to the rigour of the law, even if it amounted death.

Yet it is not to be supposed that Clement, gallant and generous, could refrain from regarding the accused with a favourable eye. They were permitted, prior to the meeting of the Cardinals, the utmost personal liberty. Indeed, it would have ill accorded with the chivalric feelings of the time, under such peculiar circumstances, to have thrown a Prince and Queen into confinement.

Robert as plenipotentiary of the Hungarian Sovereign, and Louis and Joanna, were honoured with an interview with Clement in the papal

palace. They kissed the golden cross on his embroidered shoe, saying that the Queen, in consideration of her sex and illustrious descent, was permitted to press her lips on his jewelled hand.

The successor of St. Peter conducted himself graciously unto each party. He lamented the obduracy of the royal Hungarian in resisting his holy mandates, but offered him freely, and without any humiliating condition, if he would repent, pardon and absolution.

“And thou, my lord Bishop of Waradin!” he cried, “although we have heard much of thy declamations, both in public and in private, against our apostolic authority, asserting, God wot, that we are voluptuous, and in other and divers respects, unworthy to hold the keys bequeathed us by St. Peter, we forgive thee. We deem thee but the creature of thy bad master of Hungary, whom God in his mercy save from the furnace of perdition!—For you, our children and vassals,” he continued, addressing Joanna

and Louis; "we admire the Christian manner in which ye propose to lay your important question before our tribunal; the innocent, not the guilty, court inquiry." The Pontiff's frown checked Robert, who was about to speak.—"Nay, we will not enter now into any discussion, but forthwith appoint the day on which the sacred college shall be convened in this our palace: then shall each side have an impartial hearing, and justice exercise her prerogative. Hear! Prince and Queen, and Bishop of Waradin! our Consistory shall be holden, God willing, on the tenth morning from the date hereof."

Clement then congratulated the royal pair on the re-appearance of the brave Englishman, their preserver; for Courtenay had discovered himself, and his resuscitation, as it were, from the dead, was the talk of Avignon. The English soldier, however, was not among the company present, which included the High Constable, Amalia, and several of the Neapolitan nobility;

indeed, it was remarked that Courtenay ever seemed desirous of avoiding the presence of Clement.

The infallible father of Christendom, extending his hands, blessed the assembly, and then, with a benignant smile, he retired to the private apartments of his palace.

CHAPTER XIV.

PASSION AND MALICE.

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano ;
A stage where every man must play his part.

Shakspeare.

IN recording the misdeeds of Robert of Hungary, and dwelling on his diabolical hypocrisy, we may be thought to have produced a character too black, and too malignant, ever to have found a representative in real and actual life ; but the historians of the time fully authorize, by their descriptions, the portrait which we have attempted to draw. Indeed, the colours of our picture, instead of being overwrought and glaring, may be, if Giannone and Petrarch are to be accredited, too faint and subdued. The Poet of Vaucluse, especially, in some of his letters

addressed to the Cardinal Colonna, has represented him the basest hypocrite that ever assumed frock and hood to cover enormities, the "pest of Italy," and a disgrace to human nature. Yet far be it from us to imagine or insinuate, that many such miserable men as Robert do exist, or have existed in the Romish church, which has numbered among her members the most sincere, self-sacrificing Christians, and some of the brightest ornaments of the world.

We have now to relate Robert's last and, perhaps, most atrocious act, and which, in its consequences, will have an important effect on the fates of several personages in our story.

The Bishop, after the interview just described with the Pontiff, returned to his own residence. He experienced no chagrin at the manner in which Clement had received him, but was rather elated than otherwise, for he imagined there was a tincture of fear in the Pope's demeanour towards him. He had scarcely reached his chamber, when he summoned to his

presence his ever trusty dependant, Forester; Robert felt a certain pleasure in communicating his successes, and nefarious projects, to this singular person; he knew the Englishman shrewd, and reposed the utmost confidence in his fidelity.

Forester stood before the Bishop in his accustomed attitude of obeisance; the latter seemed in deep meditation, and some minutes elapsed before he spoke.

"Thou seest I am returned, sirrah!" at length he said; "haste! disrobe me!"

Forester commenced his task with mute alacrity; he took off the Bishop's glittering mitre, and flowing simar, and arrayed him in a black stole, the hood of which partially concealed his shaven crown.

Robert rose from his seat, and paced the room in unusual excitement; his air indicated impatience; his brow was furrowed by thought, and he seemed revolving some important question in his mind. The servitor regarded his master with

feelings of anxiety, not unallied to fear; he inquired whether he were indisposed, but to his interrogatory Robert returned no answer.

And what was the subject of that unprincipled and malicious man's meditations? Louis and Joanna he persecuted with a fiendish assiduity; and as if the calamities which had already befallen them, coupled with their present perilous and anxious situation, were not sufficient, he resolved to throw more gall into their cup of bitterness. But independently of inflicting pain on his enemies, the act he meditated would afford him the means of gratifying a strong and unhallowed passion, which had long burned in his heart. In the halls of Castel-Nuovo he had frequently seen Louis's sister; the recent meeting under the roof of the Pontiff's palace, when Amalia appeared more beautiful than his dreams had ever pictured seraph or saint, had fanned the smouldering embers to a flame; and he was now mad with a passion, such as a Satyr might have conceived for the Paphian Goddess, or a fiend for an angel of light.

"Sirrah!" said Robert, turning abruptly, "canst thou inform me whether the English rascal, Walter Courtenay, who, after all, it appears, is not drowned, dare still pay his devoir to the sister of Prince Louis?"

Forester was startled by the question, but checking his surprise, he answered calmly:

"Report says so, my lord Bishop; the Englishman hath not desisted from his folly yet."

"Can I trust this fellow?" muttered the churchman between his teeth, continuing his rapid movement through the room; and Robert again stopped, fixing his piercing eyes full on his shrinking servitor.

"He too shall suffer;" he continued to speak in an incoherent manner to himself: "I regard *him* now as my enemy. By Heaven, I will hesitate no longer! I have triumphed as yet in every undertaking, and I shall triumph now!—she may love him; she may shrink from me as from a basilisk, yet shall she be mine. Consequences? pshaw! secrecy and mystery shall

envelope the deed ; and come what may, supported by the powerful King of Hungary, I will defy Joanna and her brace of paramours—Louis and the Pope, ha ! ha ! ha !”—and Robert sank into a chair, and laughed as the Prince of darkness may laugh, among his compeers in pandemonium.

Light broke now upon the understanding of the wondering Forester. He read the meaning of the fierce emotions which agitated his miserable master : Robert was not past the age when men are susceptible of passion ; and the idea that he entertained such for the lady whom he had named, called up no smile on the servitor's face ; on the contrary, knowing Robert's desperate nature, and malicious disposition, and reflecting on what might ensue, Forester was overwhelmed with fear and dismay.

“ I need not now bind thee to secrecy,” said the Prelate, “ for thou art mine already, body and soul.”

The obsequious slave placed his hand on his breast, and bowed a melancholy assent.

And Robert then proceeded to make a full disclosure of his plans to Forester, without whose assistance he could not have carried his measures into effect.—“ And now,” he whispered in conclusion, “ it is some ten days ere we shall assemble to pass sentence upon Louis and Joanna; meanwhile those two Hungarians, who will serve me as they value their lives, inasmuch as they know a word of mine would hang them for certain crimes they have committed—those two Hungarians will watch the movements of the lady. On the first opportunity they must seize her, and bear her to the solitary cottage respecting which I have been just speaking; and thither, my worthy servitor, shalt thou repair, this very day, and make the necessary arrangements with its occupier, whose services, I know, money will command. Thou dost understand me; concealed from all, she shall be lodged there until our return to Hungary.”

Forester had listened to his master in silence, but it was the silence of horror, not of acqui-

escence with his meditated scheme of unparalleled villany. Every affair in which he had yet been engaged for Robert, seemed trivial and innocent in comparison with this. The poor fellow shuddered; he was unable to speak, but gazed intently on the evil man before him.

“What dost thou stare at? is my speech obscure? or dost thou desire further directions? ah! another thought strikes me—by the mass! it is well that the Englishman still lives; yes, what I deemed adverse to my hopes, will be most propitious;—it shall seem to the world—” and Robert stopped suddenly, striking his forehead with his broad palm.

But Forester now awoke from the state of stupefaction into which he had been thrown.

“My lord Bishop of Waradin!” he cried, “thou wouldst have me share in this diabolical deed—pardon me for calling it such: yea, I have obeyed thee, and, in every reasonable thing, will obey thee still; but in this matter, concerning the illustrious and innocent lady, oh! do not compel me into thy service!”

Robert was not prepared for this language from his dependant; his eyes sparkled with rage; and clenching his hand, he vehemently exclaimed:

“ Dog! pismire! dost thou presume to question my actions? wilt thou dare even in wish to withstand my commands? knowest thou not that I am lord of thy body and soul? by the holy Evangelists! object again to obey thy master, and I will send thee off immediately to Rome! and there, in the Inquisition, on the rack, the rack, shalt thou writhe and agonize!”

Forester entertained a most deadly terror of that oft-threatened Inquisition; he was aware of the Bishop's cruelty, and doubted not his power to immure him within those walls of wailing and woe. At the thought of such a punishment, his blood ran cold, and his limbs shook beneath him.

“ Have mercy on me! Bishop of Waradin! think of all my past services, although I may not perform your bidding now: oh! consign me not to such a dreadful doom!”

But Robert exhibited no touch of pity for the anguish of his unhappy servant.

“Then thou dost still refuse to assist me in carrying out my designs:—nay, never look around thee, villain, for thou art wholly in my power. I shall now make out thy committal, and send thee at once to Rome.”

Forester gasped for breath, clasped his hands, and with difficulty cried:

“Holy Bishop! suspend thy proceedings! for the love of Heaven!—I—”

“Haste thee, fellow, in thy decision! one of two paths thou must choose. Obey my commands, and speedy promotion, and yonder ponderous bag of sequins shall be thine;—disobey, and for the remainder of thy days, thou wilt gnash thy teeth in remediless woe.”

We shall not attempt to describe further the Englishman's feelings, or the melancholy appearance he presented. There was a terrible struggle in his bosom between principle and fear; he thought of the blackness of the part which he

was called upon to perform ; and then arose the love of liberty, and a consideration of the pleasant things the world had to bestow, while his eyes, as if by instinct, glanced towards the chest which contained the promised gold. Unhappy man ! his situation was a perplexing one ; but self-interest, and self-preservation at length prevailed over the better feelings of his heart, and he swore eternal fidelity and obedience to Robert of Hungary.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEIZURE.

But thou exulting and abounding river,
Making thy waves a blessing as they flow,
Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever,
Could man but leave thy bright creation so.

Childe Harold.

IN surveying the expanse of ocean, heaving,
mingling with the sky; beautiful yet awful;
embleming in its restlessness the passions of
man, and in its immensity, limitless eternity;
the mind is lost; a consciousness of our frailty
and insignificance presses upon us; imagination
is borne away, away, nothing to curb her course;
light ideas, gay fancies, vanish; and in their
place a solemnity, an awe, steal upon our spirits,

and elevate our thoughts to Him the Fabricator of the rolling terror before us.

How different a train of thought is elicited by the contemplation of a broad lake, or a gliding river! it is like turning from the Farnesian Hercules to gaze on the delicate proportions of the Medicean Venus. The mind that was awed and entranced, is now softened and delighted. A glassy stream dotted with green islets, and mirroring the sky; flowers adorning its banks, and ancient trees bending down their verdant branches to kiss the sparkling waves; such a scene is favourable to the gentle flights of fancy, and the tender dreams of love; while it laps the soul in meditations that draw her away from the "work-day world," its jarring interests, and all the harsh realities of life.

We have been tempted to indulge in the above remarks, since we wish to place the reader on the banks of a beautiful river—the wooded and romantic Rhone. It was one of those delightful mornings of Spring, balmy but

exhilarating, peculiar to the regions of the South. The sun, however, had arisen for some hours, and quaffed his wonted draught of nectar—the dews that had glittered on a thousand shrubs and flowers. The Rhone was rushing on, foaming and sparkling, and kissing with diamond waves his numerous plane-tree islets. Here the wild stag was drinking, and ever and anon tossing his antlers, and rolling his eyes, fearful lest any early hunter should be abroad and espy him; and there the angler had taken his stand, and, with bended form and eye intent, was pursuing his silent pastime.

At some distance below the point where the Durance pours its slender tribute into the Rhone, and proceeding along the banks of the latter river, might have been seen a gay party of both sexes. From the absence of falcon and hound, and no follower being equipped with bow or spear, it was evident that they designed neither to hawk nor to hunt; in truth, their sole intent was to enjoy the salubrity of the morning, and

to delight their eyes with the picturesque views which that part of the country exhibited.

The company consisted of the Prince and Queen of Naples, their immediate friends, and a few of the Provençal nobility. They had set out early from Avignon, chiefly at the solicitation of Petrarch now abiding in that city, and who, judging the tastes of others by his own poetical feelings, presumed they would be highly delighted with the Rhone, and its scenery.

Having passed through a valley, the river close on one hand, and a high wood on the other, the party entered upon a more extended tract of country. Cowslipped meadows and green olive-yards spread before them; on the north arose the vine-covered hills of Vaucluse; and far in the distance, white with snows, was seen Mont Genevre, towering like a giant amidst his brethren—the Cottian Alps.

Our Italian friends, the better to enjoy themselves, dismounted, and, delivering their steeds to the care of their attendants, strolled, as their fancies prompted, in various directions.

Queen Joanna walked between Louis and Petrarch, leaning on the arm of the former. Apart from the rest of the company, they wandered along the banks of the river, and indulged in conversation unchecked by the frigidity, and formalities of speech observed in courts—conversation which is the interchange of thoughts between tasteful, and congenial minds.

“And now, Prince Louis,” said Petrarch, after descanting on various topics which, not being relevant to the matter of our history, we shall pass in silence; “may I ask if there be any truth in the report, that the Englishman who has rendered you such eminent services, is enamoured, or rather is the accepted suitor of the Princess Amalia?”

A slight frown darkened the countenance of Louis, and Joanna shook her head; Courtenay himself did not form one of the party, for he had journeyed northward into Dauphiny, to execute a commission for his royal patrons.

“Signor Petrarca,” said Joanna, “we indeed

owe much to this Englishman, and it is too true that he has conceived an unfortunate partiality for my sister-in-law; yet, methinks, he must content himself with that description of intellectual love which thou hast described to us; a love that enjoins distance from its object, and which has no hope of matrimony, nor even desires it."

"He is a most noble, and honourable man;" observed Louis; "but even were my sister disposed to receive his attentions, thou art aware, Signor Petrarca, that no precedent exists in history of one, not of royal blood, wedding a lady descended in the male line from the house of Anjou. In fact, such an alliance could never be formed; therefore we have strictly forbidden Courtenay's intercourse with Amalia, although we shall appoint him to a high station, when God shall be pleased to restore unto us our kingdom of Naples."

Here leaving the Prince and Queen, and their gifted companion, we will follow the fair

subject of their conversation, who was walking in another part of the valley. The Count of Aix, a young exquisite of the times, was her protector and guide. The Provençal fop was dressed in the most approved and *recherché* costume that the prevailing fashion prescribed; his doublet was slashed, and stiff with gold lace: his hose was of the brightest crimson silk; his high-heeled shoes were of a most preposterous length; and his rich velvet cap was adorned with a large ostrich feather.

The Count of Aix endeavoured by every flattering phrase which he had learnt in the *cours d' amour* of Provence, and by every action which he considered gallant and graceful, to win an interest with Amalia; but her heart was sad, her mind was occupied with the thoughts of another, and she received his attentions with an air of absence, and total indifference.

“ Charming Princess !” he cried, “ I bless the day that brought thee to Provence; I did not imagine that such great beauty and goodness

could exist out of my country. Thou art like a bird visiting us from Paradise, more lovely because unexpected. Ah ! pardon me—turn not away ! I only give utterance to the truth.”

A shallow rivulet intercepted their path, and in which lay some smooth stones, placed there to facilitate the crossing ; the Count of Aix proposed that they should ascend to the head of the streamlet.

“ And wherefore object to cross here ! ” asked Amalia ; “ these white stones form a pretty and simple bridge ; and even if ye slip, the water is not sandal deep.”

“ Sandal deep ! sandal deep ! ” exclaimed the Provençal exquisite ; “ to damp thy shoe would endanger thy life ; by our Lady ! the task is too replete with danger for either of us to attempt.”

Without saying more, Amalia resigned her conductor’s arm, and passing lightly over the stones, in an instant gained the opposite side.

“ Certes ! I should not have believed this ! ” cried the gallant : “ thou art a very Calypso

tripping over her island rocks ; but thy Ulysses will follow."

Hereupon proving the stability of the stones, and full of fear lest he should soil his silk hose, the descendant of a race of heroes succeeded at length in crossing the brook. They walked along the margin of the rivulet, until they arrived at a clump of trees which stood apart from the neighbouring wood. Some pious hand had erected there a cross of stone to the Guardian Saint of Provence ; and the Count and maiden, fatigued, leant against its granite shaft.

Amalia gazed towards the north ; she sighed, and tears stood in her eyes. Her companion, in his consummate vanity, considered her emotion as the first symptom of a delicate passion for himself.

" Lovely Amalia ! wherefore art thou so sad ? yet believe me, I am flattered, enraptured ; ah ! do not suppose that I can be ungrateful, or that my heart is already another's ; nor needest thou fear that thy brother will oppose the suit of the Count of Aix."

Amalia was silent; she heard him not; her thoughts were wandering far away; in fancy she was with Courtenay traversing the flowery vales of Dauphiny; yet was she more firmly convinced than ever that she could not be his. Joanna's kindness softened, but failed to remove her sorrow; and a recent remonstrance from her brother Louis had rendered her utterly hopeless. The gallant of Provence, observing that she took no notice of him, and presuming that her silence arose from delicacy and reserve, drew nearer, and gently pressed her hand.

“Lovely being! how shall I assure thee? how express the depth of my affection? banish every doubt, every anxiety!—here do I offer thee my lands, my heart, my all!”

Amalia, awaking from her reverie, cast upon the young noble a look of surprise and anger; while her brow, for the first time, perhaps, in her life, darkened with ineffable scorn.

“Count of Aix! I understand not thy language; but if thou dost mean—” she immediately

softened her manner, being one of those who would not give pain even to an enemy. “ Pardon me ! pardon me ! I know that you intend me no ill. I believe you would not willingly heighten my sorrows. Yet I will not deceive you ; I am grateful for your good opinion—but your love is nothing—can be nothing to me—another—”

“ Another ? ” cried the exquisite, with as much fierceness as he could throw into his effeminate manner—“ Another ? then the report is correct, although, by Heaven, I could not have believed that a man in whose veins runs the blood of the common herd—one—”

“ Count Raimond of Aix !—” but whatever Amalia intended to have said, died on her lips ; her attention was suddenly arrested by a rustling among the trees, for they were standing on the borders of a forest : she now observed the glimmering of a sword among the thick foliage, and eagerly motioned her companion to look in that direction. The gallant declared that he beheld

nothing, and even if robbers did lurk there, he said, no need had she to be alarmed, since he was near to protect her : “ Yes, let them come, lady ; it will give me an opportunity of exhibiting my devotion unto thee, and of winning a claim upon thy gratitude.”

The faint trampling of steeds pressing through the trees, was heard, and then followed the low murmur of voices. Amalia gazed around—Louis and his courtiers wandered at a distance, and no individuals were near, except a few bower-maidens who were plucking flowers on the borders of the stream, and the puny Count.

“ Dismiss thy fears, dearest lady !” cried the gallant of Provence ; “ although I see them now, yonder soldiers are but travellers, who have dismounted to regale themselves in the forest.”

The last words had scarcely passed his lips, when two men, issuing from the borders of the wood, rushed impetuously towards them. They were arrayed in the garb usually worn by the English Adventurers, but visors concealed their

faces : the foremost trooper, with one blow of his gauntleted hand, stretched the puissant Count of Aix senseless upon the ground ; they then seized Amalia in their arms, and hurried with her into the forest.

The shriek of the maiden thrilled through the air, and reached Louis and Joanna at the bottom of the valley ; it was the shriek of deadly terror, and agony, but it was suddenly stifled ; and away, unchecked, unopposed, the horsemen bounded with their prize.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SUSPECTED.

——There's no art
 To find the mind's construction in the face;
 He was a gentleman on whom I built
 An absolute trust.

Macbeth.

THE shades of evening were beginning to envelop the city of Avignon, when two men, on steeds covered with dust and foam, passed under the eastern walls; the cavaliers were Louis, and his friend Nicola Acciajuoli. As soon as the fate of Amalia had been known, the Prince and some of his attendants had mounted their horses, and commenced pursuit, while Petrarch conducted the Queen back to the city. For several hours they dashed through the forest in the direction which they supposed the horsemen to have taken;

then they scoured the open country; but such had been the speed of the miscreants, or the secrecy of the path which they pursued, that no clue could be found, nor any information gained respecting them.

In rage and frantic grief at the outrage committed upon his sister, Louis reined up his steed before the gates of his palace; he entered with Acciajuoli, and hastened to the apartments of Joanna. The Queen was sitting alone, and her eyes were filled with tears. On perceiving her husband, she arose, and with that tenderness and placidity which ever distinguished her manner, even in hours of distress, warmly embraced him.

“God be praised that you are returned in safety! I had many fears lest, meeting with the ruffians, you might have been overpowered; but oh! why so agitated? has your search for our sister been unavailing?”

Louis was choking with emotion, and he could only stammer with difficulty: “yes, she is lost! my sister is lost for ever!”

Acciajuoli was moved at witnessing the distress which shook the manly frame of his friend : but Louis started, as if some light had suddenly broken upon his mind, and clenching his hand, he exclaimed :—

“ She is gone ! but who—who is he that hath committed this act of unparalleled villainy ? common robbers the horsemen could not have been, for what motive might such have ? they were the creatures of some daring and desperate man ; some—some—tell me, Acciajuoli ; tell me, Joanna, what are your thoughts on the subject ? ”

The Florentine cast a look of embarrassment upon the Queen, for he feared to state his opinion.

“ Far be it from me, Prince Louis,” he said at length, “ to impeach an innocent person ; but something whispers me, that no man in Provence is more likely to have perpetrated this outrage than the Count of Aix ; and I know him to be enamoured of the Princess, your sister.”

“ Pshaw ! the Count of Aix ? ” cried Louis ;
“ that timorous, carpet knight ! the measure was
beyond his daring. Moreover, did we not find
him senseless on the ground ? ”

“ What does my lord think,” said Joanna,
“ of that dark insidious Hungarian, the late
chancellor of Naples ? in former days he offered
love to Amalia, although she repulsed him with
scorn. He is among our enemies, and in the
train, I understand, of the Bishop of Waradin.”

“ Neither—neither of them ! ” answered Louis ;
“ my suspicions alight upon a more resolute and
aspiring person ; yet do I ardently pray to Hea-
ven that I be in error.”

“ Disclose to us all your thoughts, Louis,”
said the Queen ; “ for we can be secret.”

“ Have not the bower-women declared, in
corroboration of the Count of Aix’s statement,
that the villains who bore off my sister, were
arrayed in long crimson mantles, and had close
iron caps on their heads—such invariably is the
costume of the English Adventurers ! ”

Joanna trembled ; the dreadful suspicion which her husband seemed to entertain, flashed also upon her own mind ; she would not, however, yield to it ; and her generosity repudiated the foul supposition.

“ Ha ! what dost thou hint, Louis ? it cannot be he, our brave our noble preserver ! a man to whom we are bound by so many ties of esteem and gratitude. Pause, my husband, ere thou dost venture to accuse Walter Courtenay ! ”

Louis was thoughtful, and spoke in a subdued tone ; “ may he be innocent ! may I not have to brand my former friend, and companion-in-arms with the name of villain ! thank Heaven ! we have no testimony beyond the fact of a similitude in dress, to prove that the men employed were actually Courtenay’s followers.”

“ And more than that, Prince Louis,” observed Acciajuoli ; “ granting even the horsemen to be English troopers,—although I am ready to allow that, from such an admission, Courtenay’s guilt might with a great shew of reason be in-

ferred,—yet may not his followers have been bribed and employed by some other rich Provençal? therefore, with the Queen, I implore you to weigh circumstances well, ere pronouncing the Englishman the guilty party.”

At this moment, an usher, entering the apartment, announced that an old man in the garb of a forester, waited in the vestibule, and craved an audience of the Prince; his business related to the late calamitous accident which had befallen the lady Amalia. Louis, in surprise, ordered the usher to introduce the man immediately, since in a matter of such importance, all ceremony might be dispensed with.

“Strange! what can such a person have to tell us respecting this mysterious affair?” observed the Prince.

“Ay, truly;” added Acciajuoli; “we who for information have vainly traversed half Provence.”

The man was conducted into the room; although attired in the humble costume of a woodman, he

had a venerable appearance; and there was that frankness stamped on the open brow, that heartiness beaming in the full bright eye, which seemed to carry at once a conviction of his honesty to the mind of the beholder.

The woodman, finding himself in the presence of a Prince and Queen, was so much disconcerted, that for several minutes he was unable to reply to the numerous questions which Louis in his eagerness put to him ; at length he spoke :—

“ Great Prince, and illustrious Queen ! pardon this intrusion of a lowly man, but I hurried to your palace to tell you what I have heard, and what I have seen of a dreadful event. Would that I had been in youth ! for then I might have rendered your Highnesses some service ; but I bend beneath seventy years, and my foot is slow, and my arm is weak.”

“ My worthy fellow !” exclaimed Louis, “ if thou hast aught to communicate touching the foul deed to which, I presume, thou dost allude, speak plainly.”

The man, after a little additional circumlocution, made the following statement, and which we are bound to say, was in strict accordance with the truth.

“ Four hours since—for that time it has taken me to come hither—I was at work in the forest on the north bank of the Durance :—it is a lonely wood that, your Highness, for no cabin will ye meet with there for many weary miles. On a sudden, I was alarmed by the shrieks of a female ; and, up a long avenue of trees, came two horsemen riding at a furious rate ; the headmost carried a lady before him ; so I guessed at once that some atrocious act had been perpetrated ; but seized with a sudden fear lest the men, discovering I had espied them, should put me to death, I concealed myself in a thicket. Presently they approached, and some felled timber in the path caused them for a few minutes to check their course ; then I heard the lady pronounce the name of Prince Louis ; she said she was his sister ; and she uttered many supplications, beseeching them to have mercy upon her ! ”

The woodman paused, Louis hanging over him in breathless impatience—"What then, old man? proceed!"

"Your Highness I had often heard of, but the name of the Princess Amalia was unknown to me. The men seemed to be soldiers, and were dressed in long red mantles; and they endeavoured to calm and pacify the lady by telling her that they bore her away for the man she loved."

"Death and fury!" cried Louis, seizing, in his excitement and passion, the woodman by the arm. "Art thou not a perjured knave? dost thou not utter a horrible falsehood?"

The poor fellow trembled, and cried out with terror, and it required little insight into human character to perceive that he, at least, was no impostor.

"The man she loved?" repeated Louis; "said the soldiers more? did they mention—his name?"

"Your Highness seems to be incensed with

me; I thought only of serving you, and of performing my duty to the high and noble."

"Nay, fear not, old man. Did thine ear catch the name of him whom the troopers spoke of, I ask?"

"Yes, and it is chiefly on this account that I come, so that your Highness may know the real offender. The soldiers got clear at length of the felled trees, and then, as they dashed away, I heard their last words to the shrieking lady; they said they were bearing her off to become the wife of their Captain—Walter Courtenay."

The woodman had nothing more to relate, yet he had disclosed sufficient; his tale was true, and as such it made its impression upon the hearers. Even Acciajuoli, sceptical before, entertained no longer a doubt of Courtenay's criminality; and Joanna, so unwilling at first to share the suspicions of her husband, fully acquiesced in the Florentine's opinion. But Louis stood for several minutes in silence, evidently struggling with the varied emotions which agitated his bosom.

“Then it is decided!” at last he exclaimed: “and this man, this smiling, elegant, smooth-tongued hypocrite—this Courtenay is the villain! now do I banish for ever gratitude, esteem, and friendship! while justice, and outraged honour, urge me to pour retribution on his head:—my sword—no, he is unworthy to die the death of an honourable man!”

Joanna was terrified at the paroxysm of rage to which her husband yielded; “Oh! my dear lord!” she cried, “thou dost forget thyself: restrain thy fiery passion, although, I admit, thou hast just cause for sorrow and anger. Courtenay, without a doubt, is beyond thy power, for since he is guilty, he will never return to Avignon, or communicate with us respecting the business on which thou didst send him into Dauphiny.”

“Nay,” said Louis, “such a consummate and practised knave as he, can assume a calm deportment, and wear the seeming of honour and rectitude. I know him; he will not resign his fame as a soldier, and a knight, but return, I

doubt not, under the full persuasion that, since he was absent when the abduction of my sister took place, the infamous act will be imputed to another. This has been his dark and dastardly scheme ; but praised be God ! our eyes are open to his craft. Old man, we sincerely thank thee for the information thou hast brought us ; but thou must remain beneath this roof in order to give thy testimony when called on ; in a few days, if I am not greatly deceived, Courtenay will be here—the felon will be in our power !”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RETURN.

He pricked his war-horse on the plain ;
 What soldier gay as he ?
 He knew not of the dreadful train
 Of ills that soon would burst amain—
 Sir Guyon, woe to thee !

Old Song.

UNCONSCIOUS of what had taken place so deeply affecting his fortunes, Walter Courtenay was traversing that part of Provence which is situated on the north east of the Rhone. He was followed by the faithful 'Squire of Louis old Camillo, and four men-at-arms. The subject of his negociation with the Lord of Valence, had been the raising of a large body of troops in Dauphiny, to act in concert with those of Provence, in the event of Joanna's being pronounced

innocent by the assembled Cardinals, since, in that case, Louis had resolved on again entering Naples, and claiming the throne. The result of this important mission, had been highly satisfactory, and Courtenay rejoiced to have been able once more to render service to Louis and the Queen.

Onward paced his light Arabian, crushing with his proud hoof the countless flowers which decked the turf, and exhaled their rich odours around. Notwithstanding the separation which had been enforced between Amalia and himself, his heart bounded with a sense of lightness it had rarely experienced before: it was not that the morning air was fresh and exhilarating; it was not that he had conquered his misplaced passion, or that he felt an inward pride, and satisfaction, at the renown he had acquired; his spirit was buoyant with the hope which never forsakes the ardent lover, so long as the object of his regard remains unwon by another. The difficulties which beset his path, only roused his energies,

and appeared to enhance the value of the prize ; and, more than all, the sweet assurance that Amalia loved him, filled his breast with a joy, the gushings of which, could they flow on for ever, would render this world of ours—this desert waste, as cynics describe it—a paradise indeed.

Wrapped in pleasing dreams, and drawing on the canvass of fancy, pictures of future success and happiness, Courtenay entered the beautiful district of Vaucluse. Old feudal towers, and convents “grey with shade,” were scattered around him ; many a bright and humming rivulet dashed and sparkled through sedge and lily, to join the lordly Rhone ; while waving woods enriched the landscape, and classic ruins gave a venerable grandeur to the scene. He rode through the small town of Carpentras, where Petrarch had studied when a boy ; and he passed many a rudely-inscribed pillar, and field famous for feats of arms, but whose celebrity, with the songs they once inspired, has for ever passed away.

Arriving within a few miles of Avignon, our little party met a Provençal peasant hastening from that city; it was the fisherman Rudel, whom we have already introduced as the neighbour and gossip of Petrarch. The man was unknown to Courtenay, but Camillo recognising him, begged the English Captain to halt for a few moments, in order that they might learn from this peripatetic news-gatherer, whether any event of consequence had transpired during their absence.

“ Alas !” said the fisherman in reply to Camillo, and shaking his hoary locks ; “ calamity upon calamity befalleth our good Countess, that is the Queen of Naples ; her sister, the lady Amalia, was yesternorn seized and carried off, some report, murdered, by two English troopers ; but my master, Signor Petrarch, who sojourns in yonder city, can tell ye all the tale ; and I am in haste to depart, for, thanks to the Saints ! I have sold all my fish.”

Courtenay, who had heard only the former

part of Rudel's communication, stared in astonishment; but surprise was soon converted into wildest alarm.

"The Princess Amalia carried off? murdered!" he cried; "thou dost dream, good fellow; what meanest thou?"

Rudel stepped back, astonished in his turn at the earnest manner of the speaker.

"The Saints pardon me! gallant stranger, but I wish I had not told thee the news, since it seems so to affect thee. The Princess has been borne off, I repeat, none know whither, but all declare that the man who has committed the deed, is the great Condottiero, the English Captain."

"He?" cried Courtenay, grinding his teeth in a transport of indignation and fury.

The fisherman softened his manner, for he trembled at the exhibition of excited feeling betrayed by the soldier.

"Pardon me, honourable sir, if my speech give thee offence; but I intend no harm; and I

beseech thee to understand that the illustrious poet, Signor Petrarch, is my patron. I am right sorry I have no fish just now to offer to you, gentle sir, but—”

Courtenay heard no more of Rudel's tirade : the little which he had learnt seemed to be a part of some fearful tale. As a ghastly object is rendered more terrible by being indistinctly seen, so a calamity, the extent of which is but half known, affects the mind more strongly than the confirmed knowledge of certain evil. Courtenay's brain was tortured ; his soul was wrought to mad impatience, and raising his mailed arm in the direction of Avignon, he exclaimed :

“ Followers, on ! spur, spur for Prince Louis's palace !”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CHARGE.

Of this man's guilt, what proofs can ye produce !

Home.

THE return of Courtenay, on the appointed day, had been fully expected by Louis, and he was prepared to receive him. A fearful scene was exhibited in the hall of his palace ; the massive doors were closed upon him who had last entered ; guards were stationed along the walls : at the far end, beneath a canopy of state, appeared Louis, surrounded by several Provençal nobles, and members of his own Court. He seemed calm indeed, but his was that stern serenity more to be feared in its consequences than the wildest ebullition of wrath. In the centre of the hall,

his head uncovered, and his hand laid on the hilt of his sword, stood Walter Courtenay; amazement which had at first lit up his features, had given place to indignation and disdain: his lip was curled, one foot was advanced, and his eyes flashed defiance upon his accusers. He looked like a Roman gladiator, in the stern attitude which he was wont to assume, ere grappling with his stalwart foe.

The chief witnesses against the Englishman, were the Count of Aix, and the old woodman. The Provençal gallant deposed to the fact that the troopers, who had seized the Princess, while under his protection, were English Adventurers, inasmuch as no other soldiers in Provence wore their peculiar costume. The woodman's testimony was of greater importance, and seemed to carry with it to the mind of every hearer an irresistible conviction of the guilt of the accused; but the nature of the evidence being fully known to the reader, we need not repeat it.

Courtenay heard the charges, and at once per-

ceived that an infamous conspiracy had been formed against him : it was evident, however, that neither the Count of Aix, nor the woodman, were parties in the foul plot. Who, then, was his covert enemy ? or rather who, to conceal his own crime, had turned the odium of the guilty act upon himself ? he was totally unable to form even a conjecture on the subject : he remained in the attitude of menace, with his sword half drawn, yet he knew not whom to challenge or defy. Had he been judicious, he would have calmly expostulated with Louis, and endeavoured to have convinced those present of the falseness of the accusation against him ; but the pride arising from the consciousness of innocence, and the impetuosity of a fiery temper, proved as prejudicial to him, as they have been to many others similarly situated : he would not deign to defend himself ; he laughed in scorn at the charge, as if it were but one of those foul and vague calumnies, which an honourable man is only called on to treat with contempt ; and this conduct went far to

strengthen in the minds of most in that hall, the belief of his guilt.

A strong spasm of feeling came upon Louis. We have seen him warmly attached to Courtenay, and grateful for the services which the Englishman had rendered him ; and he almost felt that he would as soon be pronounced guilty himself of the crime imputed to him by the Hungarian King, as be called on to condemn a man who, in addition to other gallant deeds, had but recently saved the life of Queen Joanna : but the station which he occupied, as well as the presence of so many Provençal and Neapolitan nobles, prevented his generous spirit from giving utterance to all he wished to unbosom.

“ Courtenay of England ! ” he cried, checking with difficulty his rising emotion ; “ far be it from me to accuse thee of this daring and treasonable act, without strong and sufficient proof. Howbeit, not myself, but these knights and noble signiors will be thy judges. Thou didst aspire to my sister’s hand, but I only acted in accord-

ance with the prescribed usages of nations, in forbidding her to ally herself to one not of royal extraction ; and now a foul and subtle part hast thou performed, seeing that, during thine absence in Dauphiny, thou hast employed men won to thy purposes to rob me of my sister, presuming in consequence of that absence, some other person would be considered the perpetrator of the deed. But God hath been pleased fully to bring thy baseness to light. Nevertheless, if thou wilt inform me whither thou hast conveyed the lady Amalia ; if thou wilt restore her to me her afflicted brother, thou shalt receive a full pardon, and be permitted to depart, uninjured, to thy native country."

" Prince Louis," answered Courtenay, " all I can tell thee is, that I am in entire ignorance as to the spot where the Princess Amalia may now be ; and her fate occasions me distress as poignant as thou thyself canst feel. Must I again declare, before God, that every portion of the charge urged against me, is utterly, and vilely false !"

Louis conferred for a few minutes with the nobles near him ; then making a sign to the guards, the latter advanced, and hemmed in the prisoner. Courtenay, however, offered no resistance ; he delivered up his sword, and suffered them to place irons upon his hands.

The command was given, and the English Captain was led from the presence of Louis and his courtiers, to the dungeons beneath the palace.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HUT.

My ends, my ends are compassed.

New Way to Pay Old Debts.

WHEN the two Hungarian soldiers, who had arrayed themselves in the long red mantles peculiar to the English Adventurers, had seized Amalia, she shrieked only for a few minutes, having fallen into a fainting fit. So rapidly did the men urge their way through the forest, that by the time Louis and Acciajuoli had commenced pursuit, they were a very considerable distance in advance ; at the same time, by pursuing a path artfully intricate, they were enabled completely to elude and baffle the Prince and his friend.

For some time the troopers pressed forwards, carefully avoiding the vicinity of village or cabin,

when crossing the shallow Durance, they plunged into the solitary woods which lie on the northern banks of that river. It was now that they were compelled to halt, the path being obstructed by masses of felled timber; and Amalia, recovering from the first alarm which had overpowered her senses, addressed the men, uttering wild entreaties and prayers. With a view to pacify her, or to reconcile her, as they imagined, to her situation, they stated that they acted under the directions of him whom they well knew she loved; and since harsh laws permitted not her union with their gallant leader, Walter Courtenay, they thought she ought to be too happy to be borne away, and made his bride. The false statement of these men, will fully account for the story told by the honest woodman, and whose evidence had operated so fatally in fixing the commission of the guilty deed on an innocent person.

The Hungarians, however, failed in the object they had in view; indeed, had the truth been

divulged at once to Amalia, she would have experienced agony less bitter than that which now wrung her spirit. Courtenay the proud, the honourable, to have resorted to such a black, nefarious project—at the thought, a sickness of the heart, a prostrating sense of misery came upon her, while the deep love which she had entertained for him, seemed almost converted into horror and hatred.

The soldiers were again in rapid motion, and still avoiding each frequented path, they drew up at length before a desolate-looking habitation; it was no better than a hovel, or hut, yet, being strongly built, it appeared to have formed a portion of an edifice of greater pretensions, but of which, with the exception of a few disjointed stones, no vestige now remained.

At the summons of the troopers, an old woman made her appearance, dressed in the garb of a Provençal peasant; her vocation was that of a fortune-teller, and she had fixed her abode in that lonely spot, knowing well how much of veneration

and awe the superstitious and vulgar attach to solitary habits. Forester, at Robert's command, had repaired to this cottage; they had stumbled upon it when journeying, some time previously, through the forest, and had taken shelter there during a thunder-storm; and now the servitor had succeeded in making an arrangement with the owner, gold being the talisman which had won her consent and secrecy.

“ Well, mother,” cried the foremost trooper springing from his saddle; “ here we are, and thanks to the Saints! we have succeeded in finding, and bringing along with us, the run-a-way nun at last.”

“ So, gentlemen,” said the crone fixing her little round fiery eye on Amalia; “ and this is the lady? and she's to stay here, poor thing, till the priest comes to take her back to her convent in Hungary?”

“ Exactly, dame;” observed the soldier; and he placed Amalia on the ground, her exhaustion not suffering her to speak. “ And recollect,

good mother, whatever she may say, thou wilt give no ear or credit to ; she'll tell thee, mayhap, long tales of her being some high lady carried off—ay, that she's the Queen of Naples, for all I know ; for I'm sorry to observe that her dread of returning to the convent which she so wickedly deserted, together with other matters, has had a strange effect here—” and the man significantly placed his finger on his forehead.

“ I understand, good gentlemen ; come along, poor dear lady—now don't speak—yes, I know all about it—you shall be quite safe here, and cared for, till the good priest arrives—come along !—how she's trembling, poor dear thing !”

The old woman, whose natural acerbity of temper had been surprisingly sweetened by the gold pieces which now weighed down her pockets, led the shrinking girl into the miserable habitation. The cottage was divided below into two compartments, and a short ladder led to the single dormitory above. The crone conducted her charge to the inner room, and placing her

on an oaken settle, commanded her to remain there, and not attempt to move without her permission. She then hurried to the troopers, who were vociferously calling for viands and liquor; and the men, seating themselves in the porch of the domicile, speedily commenced doing justice to the dame's forest cheer.

The scenes which Amalia had gone through, and what she now witnessed, utterly perplexed and bewildered her senses: yet in spite of the words which had passed between the old woman and the soldiers, she still entertained the harrowing idea that she had been borne thither by the command of Courtenay. The woman did not immediately return, and raising her head, the girl looked tremblingly around the squalid apartment; the walls were built of stone, and horn windows, too narrow to allow of the egress of an human being, admitted a feeble light: she started, for at the further end of the room, leaning on a bench, she perceived the figure of a man: he did not move, and his body being

bent forwards, and his head rested on his hands, she could not see his countenance. He was in mental or bodily pain, for he groaned deeply; and it was with feelings of interest, although not unmingled with fear, that Amalia now regarded him.

Suddenly the man arose, having mastered apparently the painful emotions which had oppressed him; and as the light fell upon his gaudy attire, and calm melancholy face, Amalia recognised—Forester.

Her perplexity increased, and she marvelled greatly how this person should have been there. Had he passed from the service of Robert to that of the English Captain? springing forwards, she eagerly caught the Servitor by his little Hungarian mantle, and imploringly addressed him:—

“ Oh! if thou hast a spark of pity in thy bosom, tell me, kind Forester, the truth of which I am still in ignorance! why am I to be confined here? better to know the worst than to remain in this agonizing suspense. Yet rather say I

am doomed to be murdered by yonder ruffians, than that thou art in the service of Walter Courtenay !”

Forester placed his finger on his lip, and beseeched her to speak in a lower tone ; he then closed the door which had stood a-jar, and looking through the horn window which commanded an obscure view of the outer room, he perceived that the old woman, either to please the troopers, or from her own inclination, had seated herself at their table, and was assisting them in draining their wine flagon.

“ Hush ! lady ; I am not my own master here. You may well marvel at your situation, but strict commands forbid me answering your questions.”

“ But surely thou mayest inform me by whose orders I am thus inhumanly treated.”

“ You shall not be inhumanly treated, honoured lady, for he who commanded your seizure professes to love you.”

This assurance seemed only to confirm

Amalia's worst conjectures, and heighten her distress.

“ Then it is he !” she cried ; “ those soldiers have spoken the truth ; and he has won thee over to do his will. Oh ! after all his noble actions ! after all his professions of honourable love ! to bring me thus to shame—to prove the robber ! the villain !—It is enough ; I would hear no more ; I have no further questions to ask of thee !”

Forester gazed on the beautiful girl, who, in her agony, had sunk upon her knees on the floor, clasping her hands, and lifting her eyes. The spell of beauty even had its effect on *his* heart, and although pledged to work out his diabolical master's designs, he regarded the victim now before him with feelings of inexpressible pity. He pondered a moment, covering his face with his hands, and as he remained in that attitude, tears might have been seen forcing their way through his fingers. But recovering his firmness, he again peered through the window, to be as-

sured that the men were still at their carousals in the porch of the hovel ; and then in a hesitating manner, he whispered :

“ Lady, you labour under an error ; I may at least tell you this—The English Captain I do not serve ; and he knows nothing of your situation !—As God is in heaven, I speak the truth !”

Amalia, with a suppressed cry of joy, started up from her kneeling posture ; rapture glistened in her eyes, and she murmured breathlessly :—

“ Great God ! I thank thee for this ! now may I love him again ! now will I brave my fate, be it torture or death !”

Forester was at a loss to account for this manifestation of delight ; he was unable to appreciate that high, and virtuous affection, which is so agonized at dishonour alighting on the object beloved. He would have rejoiced in rescuing Amalia from the power of the licentious Robert, but he had proceeded too far ; the Hungarians, he well knew, would never listen to any proposal that would compromise their fidelity to their

master, since the violation of their engagement to him would be voluntarily placing their own necks in the gibbet-cord, for Robert, as we have elsewhere shown, was acquainted with a secret that at any time, if divulged, would have sent them to the gallows.

“ Noble lady !” said Forester, “ though I cannot save thee ; though I am bound by the most sacred oaths to the Bishop of Waradin, yet if thou wilt promise secrecy, I will unfold that which may advantage thee to know. Nay, tremble not, and utter no further exclamations, lest yonder Hungarians suspect I am playing our master false.”

Forester concealed the worst, yet Amalia gathered sufficient from his disclosure, to perceive that her situation was most dreadful. So kind, however, did the poor fellow appear, and so wrung was his spirit by an unavailing remorse, that she was unable to upbraid him for the part which he had taken in the foul transaction.

“ Honoured lady, I must now depart, and re-

turn to Avignon, for I can render thee no service by continuing here. The woman of the cottage will attend to your wants, and the Hungarians, who will remain as a guard, I can pledge my word, will offer thee no injury. But—" and the speaker glanced around the room, drawing, at the same time, cautiously from beneath the folds of his doublet, a short poniard—" This is the best safeguard I can leave thee—let it be thy last resource—Heaven will forgive the deed—when he arrives—when he approaches thee, plunge it into his heart!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE CONDEMNATION.

There is a destiny in this strange world
Which oft decrees an undeserved doom ;
Let schoolmen tell us why."

Home's Douglas.

PRINCE Louis continued indefatigable in his endeavours to discover the spot where his sister Amalia had been concealed ; but in a country so extensive, and abounding at that period with almost interminable woods, it was a matter of no surprize that neither he, nor those whom he employed, chanced to find the solitary cottage. At the same time, Robert's secret being in the keeping of three persons, whose very lives hung on his breath, there appeared little probability that any elucidation of the mystery would take

place. Yet as far as regarded Courtenay, and the popular opinion, no mystery seemed to exist. Again he had been placed before the barons and knights; and again the question had been patiently investigated. Astute lawyers, also, pleaded the cause of the prisoner; but nothing could overthrow the evidence of the Count of Aix, and the Woodman, which, considered in connexion with the Englishman's well-known partiality for Amalia, and his fruitless love-suit, was all powerful in deciding the case. The Neapolitan and Provençal Nobles, therefore, without a dissenting voice, pronounced Courtenay guilty; and such was the unparalleled daring of an act which amounted to treason of a heinous description, the victim being a scion of a royal house, that no milder punishment than death could be awarded the offender.

When the decision of the nobles was communicated to Queen Joanna, she was greatly distressed. Her husband and herself proposed that the sentence of death should be commuted

to some less terrible punishment; but it was subsequently represented to them, that notwithstanding the power which they possessed of extending mercy to culprits in general, since the unfortunate lady was a member of their own family, it was absolutely necessary that popular indignation should be satisfied, and justice take its course. Joanna and Louis, therefore, after a severe struggle, yielded to the advice of their counsellors, and Walter Courtenay was to suffer death on the scaffold.

And how, when the Englishman's doom was known, did his faithful men, the shattered remains of his gallant band, conduct themselves? they entertained little doubt but their leader had been privy to the abduction of the lady Amalia; yet which of their number had assisted him in his designs, since every one denied participation in the affair, it was impossible for them to determine. All, however, agreed so far, that, whether his act was one of excusable gallantry, or whether it were treason, it devolved on them as an

undoubted duty, to rescue him from his impending fate.

These bold spirits, about seventy in number, held a consultation in the suburbs of the city. Opinions were anxiously exchanged, and divers plans proposed for effecting an entrance into Courtenay's prison, and setting him at liberty. At length it was resolved that, under cover of night, they should proceed in a body to Prince Louis's palace, disarm the guard, and, with sledge hammers, burst open the iron-bound doors which led to the subterranean dungeon.

In carrying this bold, but too hastily formed project into execution, the worthy fellows only subjected themselves to disappointment and defeat. It is true, they quickly overpowered the palace-guard, but they had not calculated on the vicinity of a strong body of Papal troops. Ere they could force the massy doors, alarm had spread far and wide; troops from all quarters poured to the spot, and they were speedily surrounded, and attacked by a vast multitude.

The brave men long defended themselves, and several of the Pontiff's soldiers fell ; but finding the execution of their design was utterly impossible, and unwilling wantonly to shed the blood of those whom, hitherto, they had considered their friends, the Englishmen now sheathed their swords. Yet this generosity and forbearance proved fatal to their liberty. They expected permission to retire without further molestation : but when it was known that many of the Provençals had been slain, the mass of the troops, in a transport of rage, rushed upon the little company. The Adventurers had no time to rally ; each man was cut off and separated from his fellow ; and in a brief time, all were captured, bound, and dragged away to the different prisons within the city of Avignon.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PALACE.

She knelt and raised her radiant eye,
Her white hands folded on her breast:
Pure as morn's first ambrosial sigh,
Or like the gentle sounds which rest
So soft, so sweet in memory's cell,
Murmured by those we once loved well;
Arose that prayer, while angels caught,
And bore to Heaven each whispered thought.

M S.

IN many of the mansions of olden times, a small apartment was peculiarly set aside for devotional purposes. Although this room could not be dignified with the name of a chapel, an altar was sometimes erected there; and in cases of sickness, or whenever it might be the will of the residents, a priest performed ecclesiastical duties.

The lamp was dimly illumining an apartment

The brave men long defended themselves, and several of the Pontiff's soldiers fell ; but finding the execution of their design was utterly impossible, and unwilling wantonly to shed the blood of those whom, hitherto, they had considered their friends, the Englishmen now sheathed their swords. Yet this generosity and forbearance proved fatal to their liberty. They expected permission to retire without further molestation : but when it was known that many of the Provençals had been slain, the mass of the troops, in a transport of rage, rushed upon the little company. The Adventurers had no time to rally ; each man was cut off and separated from his fellow ; and in a brief time, all were captured, bound, and dragged away to the different prisons within the city of Avignon.

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of this description in Louis's palace; the image of many a saint, whose names and acts of holiness are now forgotten, stood on slender pedestals around. The veil of silk, which usually concealed the little altar, was drawn aside; and on it were seen the tall silver cross, and the Virgin mother breathing her beauty and meekness in stone. No priest officiated, but two figures appeared there in an attitude of deep devotion. A profusion of golden locks flowed over the bosom of the female; her alabaster hands were clasped, and her eyes, soft as the dove's, yet full of holy passionate feeling, were raised to Heaven. The man was attired, not in the extravagant fashion of the day, but with simple elegance; in one hand he held a missal, while his right arm was passed around the neck of the lady by his side. He repeated in solemn accents a portion of the Roman service. Perhaps there is no sight more interesting than that of a husband and wife mingling their devotions, and breathing their petitions to Heaven; one wish,

one hope, one soul their own ; and if they are sincere, surely the incense of their private prayer shall arise to God as acceptable, and as certain of an answer, as the echoes of the loudest supplication that ever rang from the churchman's pulpit, in the ears of awe-struck thousands.

The Cardinals were to be assembled on the morrow. Another night, and the devout pair at that altar would be proclaimed to the world innocent, and worthy of a kingdom, or their names would be blackened for ever, and their lives probably forfeited.

They felt the high importance of preparation, and that they stood on the threshold of their fate ; yet they were calm, for they confided in Heaven. Some natural tremors however, at times, agitated their bosoms, and a sickening chill came over them, at the thought that their enemies *might* prevail, and that eternal ignominy *might* be their doom.

Louis closed the missal, and breathed a short but fervent prayer to Him who overrules the

'destinies of men, and in whose hands are the gifts of kingdoms; who sometimes suffers the virtuous to be pronounced evil, and for inscrutable but wise purposes, heaps calamities on those whom he loves.

Joanna never felt such affection for her husband as at that hour; never before had she beheld him so fervent, so devout: it seemed as though religion bound him doubly close to her heart; and when his supplication was concluded, and they arose, and had kissed the silver crucifix on the altar, she fell upon his neck, and gave vent to her varied feelings in a gush of tears.

They retired and seated themselves; but Louis and Joanna now banished thoughts of their own approaching fate, to meditate upon that of another. No circumstance had transpired calculated to raise a doubt of the criminality of Courtenay; indeed the scene grew darker around him, for now, in addition to the abduction of Amalia, there appeared grounds for believing that the English troopers, hearing of their leader's

condemnation, in order to avoid full detection, had murdered the unhappy lady.

Joanna addressed Louis in a voice tremulous with emotion :

“ You think, then, no mercy can be extended to Courtenay ; and that even if he confess his atrocious deed, repentance now cannot avail him.”

Louis sighed deeply—“ You know my secret wish, Joanna ; I would have saved him from death ; but the voice of the barons, as well as the counsel of the Pope, forbid such clemency on our parts—Courtenay must die !”

“ Will they put him to the question ? will they place him on the rack ?”

“ No, that would be needless torment, for I am well aware that, from a man so indomitable in soul as he, torture would extract nothing.”

“ And when,” asked Joanna mournfully, “ is he to die ?”

“ Our courtiers blame me for allowing him to live so long ; yet have I protracted the date

of his existence from a latent hope that his innocence might yet appear. On the day succeeding our trial, Courtenay, by the appointment of the Barons, is to suffer the punishment due to his crime. Whether we be acquitted, or condemned, the authorities in Avignon will see the sentence of the law executed upon him. Yet I would behold him once more; I would take leave of the man who, villain though he be, has a claim upon my gratitude; yes, I will this hour visit him in his dungeon."

"But taunt him not; render not his last moments fruitlessly bitter—remember he saved my life."

"That consideration, Joanna, disarms even the just vengeance of an injured brother."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRISON.

“ Adieu, bold Chieftain ! side by side,
We oft have stemmed the battle’s tide ;
Yet justice bids thee die.
Despite thy crime, thou warrior brave !
I’ll think of thee when in the grave,
With many a tear and sigh.”

THE apartment, or rather cell, in which Courtenay was confined, had been cut out of the solid rock, which formed the foundation of the castellated mansion above. An aperture in the roof admitted air, but no light ; an antique lamp, hanging by a rusty chain, served in some degree to dissipate the darkness. A chair, and an oaken table blackened and decayed by time, comprehended the entire furniture of the place ; while dried rushes, heaped in one corner,

formed a hard, but not altogether a comfortless bed.

It has been stated that an innocent person condemned to die, will experience less mental agony, than he who is guilty: true, the former has a quiet conscience, and an inward satisfaction to support him; but then comes the withering reflection that men believe him the felon which erring judges have declared him to be; that his memory will be branded, when it ought to be held, perhaps, in honour and esteem. Indeed, it may not be too much to say that if he look no further than the present world, he will almost wish that he had really committed the crimes attributed to him, in order to merit the indignities and sufferings which are heaped so unjustly upon him.

Courtenay, with folded arms, was slowly pacing his narrow abode; his air was calm and proud, though at times his cheek turned white, and his frame shivered, as he yielded to a fearful thought, or an agonizing feeling. Now he would

stop suddenly, and mutter to himself; then forgetting his serener deportment, he would stamp as in wrath, and feel for the hilt of the sword which he no longer wore.

“ Oh! God!” he exclaimed, “ what have I done to merit this? if justice be one of thine attributes, reveal the truth unto men.—Who is he? who is the wretch that hath conspired against me? would he were here that I might send the steel to his dastardly heart!—ah! I have no weapon—then, then, that I might tear him to pieces!”

His features worked; his eyes glared; his hands were clenched; and for a minute he exhibited the wild demeanour of an infuriated maniac.

“ My son! my son!” exclaimed a voice, mild and impressive, for the prisoner was not alone; one of those benevolent men, whose delight is to minister to the afflicted, and offer salvation to the reprobate in the hour of their penitence or remorse, had gained admittance to Courtenay’s

cell. The aged priest sat at the table; a breviary was spread before him; his hands were raised in a supplicating manner, and his silver beard, on which the lamp-beams faintly streamed, fell on the book.

“ My son ! my son ! ” he cried, “ earthly passions will avail thee nothing. Calm thy troubled spirit, and prepare to meet thy awful doom. Death is a fearful enemy, and not to be grappled with as ye may struggle against an human adversary. How insignificant are the possessions, the honours of this world, compared with an eternity of felicity or woe ! yet despair not ; heinous as thy crime may be, if thou art penitent, Heaven will not withhold its forgiveness. Come, my son, kneel at my feet, and I will pray for thee.”

Courtenay took no heed of the devout Father, but turned impatiently away, and leant against the side of his cell.

“ And what is her fate ? ” he murmured ; “ selfish that I am, to lament my own lot, when hers is so dreadful ! ”

“ My son ! why art thou deaf to my entreaties ? ” pursued the Father ; “ why dost thou not give thy attention to holy things ? I have no desire to speak of thy crime, or to argue whether thou be guilty or innocent ; my office is to prepare thy soul for the great change about to take place, for the authorities, I understand, have appointed the day even that follows the morrow, for thy execution.”

“ God’s will be done ! ” exclaimed Courtenay approaching the Priest, and kneeling at his feet. The fatal announcement seemed to restore him to his habitual serenity. A smile not of recklessness, or hardihood, but expressing amicable feeling, and mournful resignation, played on his lip ; he stooped his head on the old man’s knees, and the latter commenced a fervent prayer.

A sudden unbolting of the dungeon door disturbed them at their devotions. The gaoler entered, and acquainted the holy Father that he must retire for a short time, since another person demanded an interview with the prisoner.

Courtenay marvelled who the intruder might be, but he was not kept long in suspense—Prince Louis stood before him.

At another time, had he met the consort of the Queen of Naples, the Englishman would have bent his knee ; but his present situation forbade his shewing that token of fealty and respect, lest it should appear, in the slightest degree, that he soothed the pride of royalty from a hope of obtaining mercy. He felt that Louis honoured him by this visit ; he would not, however, express the sentiment, but stood erect, calmly and silently meeting the glance of the Prince, who, of the two, was the more agitated.

The keeper of the prison had withdrawn, and closed the door : the lamp threw its pallid light upon the two motionless figures ; and no sound was heard except the deep murmur of the Rhone, as its rapid waves rushed past the massive walls.

“ Soldier of England ! ” said Louis, endeavouring to conceal his emotion, and gazing

around ; “ this indeed for thee is a melancholy habitation ! would to heaven that, instead thereof, thou didst occupy a palace ! ”

“ Yet this dungeon,” observed Courtenay in bitter irony, “ with a spider for my companion ; with a bundle of rushes for my couch, and yonder lamp to light me in my lonely perambulations, surpasses the deserts of one who hath committed such an enormous crime.”

“ I come not,” said Louis mildly, “ to impress upon thee the perfidy of thy conduct ; it is enough for me to reflect on thy present situation, without augmenting its grievousness by fruitless upbraidings. No, Courtenay ! thou who hast rendered so many services to me and mine, I would not part with thee in wrath ; I would convince thee, now thou art about to atone for a crime committed under the influence of a criminal passion, that I can be calm, though I may not forgive. I would know if thou hast any commission which I can execute for thee in this world, and then take leave of thee for ever ! ”

As the speaker concluded, the sternness of Courtenay's demeanour passed away, for the kindness of Louis affected him.

“ I thank thee ! I thank thee ! ” he cried ;
“ now would it were in my power to convince thee that I am not the guilty man thou dost imagine me ! but as hitherto my efforts have failed, I must be silent now. Yet do I believe that you act in strict conformity with your imagined duty ; my blood, therefore, will not be upon your head. Touching your kind offer to perform aught for me after my decease, I have little wherewith to trouble you. My lineage, as I have informed you before, is wrapped in obscurity ; no father, no brother, no relative have I, unto whom I might send a last farewell.”—A tear rolled down the soldier's cheek, and with difficulty he continued : “ kind Prince, the possessions which I hold in Florence, bestowed upon me by that republic for some services which I rendered them in their war with Milan, I bequeath to the remnant of my faithful

followers ; this paper directs that the money proceeding from the sale of the fief, be equally divided among them ; and now inform me what punishment has been awarded them for their late ill-advised attack upon your palace.”

Louis did not immediately answer, being unwilling to advert to the matter ; but the question having been repeated, he informed the Englishman that the magistrates of Avignon considered it their duty to hold the men prisoners ; but he would pledge his word that the gallant fellows should be set at liberty, immediately after their leader’s death.

His features flushing with sudden emotion, Courtenay now approached Louis. He was desirous of addressing him on a subject to which he had not yet alluded ; and he gazed around, as if fearful that his voice might penetrate the massive walls :

“ It has been whispered even in my cell,” he said in a low and hesitating tone, “ that—that your sister—” he was again silent ; each gazed

fixedly upon the other, and Louis's countenance, at the unexpected allusion, grew dark and menacing ; but Courtenay proceeded—" that your sister has been murdered by the very villains who bore her away—Oh ! assure me that the horrible rumour is false !"

Louis forgot himself in the indignation which swelled his heart, and seemed to fill his veins with fire ; he drew back, knitting his brows, and raising his hand :

" Ha ! who art thou that speakest thus ? wilt thou play the hypocrite even on the verge of the grave !—the villains, forsooth, who bore her away ?—by the Lord above ! does not the blacker villain who employed them stand before me ?"

Courtenay's blood mounted to his temples ; never before had one called him by that name and lived :—a villain ! the word stirred the wildest passions of his nature : honour, whose mirror had not been breathed upon from his boyhood, was it thus, in his very face as it were, to be foully blackened ?—In the madness of a

wounded spirit, the weaponless man would have sprung upon his defamer; but recollecting his situation, and the belief which Louis entertained, he curbed the strugglings of passion as well as he was able: he bowed his face on his hands, and groaned bitterly—"would that my living ears had been spared this! and yet I do seem unto thee this foul thing—I seem unto thee a villain!"

"Courtenay," said Louis, "I intended not wantonly to give thee pain; pardon me my hasty expression. Honour is a radiant Goddess, and better even *feign* to defend and worship her, than to despise, and trample on her image in the face of men."

"Feign to worship her! feign!" muttered Courtenay; "well, Prince Louis, think as thou wilt, but spare me further observations on a subject fraught with bitterness to thyself, and fruitless agony to me."

And Louis was obedient, for he felt assured that the very desire of appearing honourable,

prevented Courtenay from confessing that he had robbed him of his sister. So far, perhaps, he did not take a wrong view of the Englishman's principles; for had the latter really been guilty, it is probable he would have preferred death to the acknowledgement of deeds calculated to throw an indelible stain upon the high character which he had, hitherto, sustained in the world.

They stood for a short time in silence, and it seemed as if little more remained to be said by either. One was too proud to state all that he might have urged in his defence; and even if he had done so, the other would not have been convinced of his innocence.

Louis, with a thoughtful, and distressed air, paced the stone cell, now fixing his eyes on the ground, and then stealing a sorrowful glance at the doomed Englishman.

“Thou hast nothing further, then, which I can do for thee—no token, no word of remembrance—no farewell.”

“ Yes, I have one request more—if—if she be indeed alive—she whom I presumptuously, madly loved ; when she shall have been restored to thee, and thou wilt discover, too late, that though a lowly, I am an honourable man, tell her not to lament my fate, or to upbraid thee for what thou hast done ; but let her forgive thee who hast condemned the innocent only through error—forgive thee as freely, as fully as the victim doth himself.”

“ This, too,” continued Courtenay, drawing from his bosom an embroidered scarf, “ which I have worn so often in the battle-field ; which has waved like a talisman on my helmet, when many a loftier crest has been struck to earth ; this restore to the high and gifted being who gave it unto me. Queen Joanna will remember it, and, perhaps, in after years, she may breathe a sigh of regret over the dust of one who would have shed his blood for her cause, and thine.”

Louis was deeply affected ; he recollected

the history of that scarf; it had been presented to the soldier by Joanna when at Baiæ, as a token of gratitude to him for an eminent service rendered to herself and Court. Stung with the bitterest sorrow, he received the pledge of honour from the hands of Courtenay; his words were almost inaudible, and he turned away his face, ashamed to betray his emotion.

“ Courtenay, thou shalt—thou shalt—Oh, never before was I unmanned like this!—thou shalt suffer no indignity, or insult, that might chafe thy proud spirit at the last hour.—When it is over, where dost thou wish—”

“ To be buried—let me rest in the little cemetery adjoining the Convent of White Friars, in the suburbs of Avignon.”

“ Thy desire shall be attended to : and now, my former companion in war, my deadly foe, and yet my friend, whose punishment is so severe, although merited, in this world we exchange but one word more.”

Louis approached the soldier ; he grasped his hand ; “ farewell !” he faltered, a tear on his manly cheek—“ Farewell ! Courtenay, for ever !”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE JUDGMENT-HALL.

“ Lo ! where she comes in robes of beauty dight,
With locks of gold, and eyes of liquid light;
Fair as the morn, and sweetly-meek as eve;
Oh ! the foul tale my heart will ne'er believe.”

MORNING dawned softly and brightly over the fair city of Avignon; the Rhone glided on in light, and the breeze wafted odours from the suburban gardens. No unwonted appearances ushered in the important day which was to decide the fate of a Prince and Queen. The pride of man has sometimes led him to conceive that the elements sympathize with human affairs; poetical fancy reads in the lowering cloud the omen of direful events, and hears in the wailing

breeze, the notes of approaching sorrow ; but the delusion vanishes before the wand of philosophy, which declares that no link exists between the concerns of mortals, and the spirit of the elements ; nature will wear gloom on her brow, when we are most prosperous and happy ; and she will smile in the softness of beauty, when human dwellings are saddened with lamentations and tears.

At an early hour, groups of citizens, in the principal streets, were seen conversing eagerly together ; foreigners, too, fluttered here and there in their motley, or brilliant costumes. From the lowest artisan, who considered it a holiday, laying aside his apron, and his hammer, to the high-born noble, dashing along on his foaming steed, an intense interest seemed to pervade every bosom. Each man, also, had his opinion relative to the probable issue of the trial ; and sums that varied from a sol and livre, up to the price of an earldom, were staked on the question. In truth, the emissaries of the King of Hungary

had been so indefatigable in their exertions to poison the public mind, that the two contending parties, so far as respected numbers, were, to all appearance, equally balanced.

The street leading to the Pontifical palace, was lined by Roman guards, cased in resplendent armour; and through this lane of steel, the chariots of the cardinals, bishops, and nobles, were rapidly advancing. But without further preamble, we shall introduce our readers into the great hall where the Consistory was to be holden. The room, designed and built since the Papal chair had been transported from Rome to Avignon, was hung for the occasion with superb tapestry, which had been manufactured in the looms of Lyon. On the ceiling was depicted a master-piece of Giotto, the most renowned painter of the age; the drawing was in fresco, and represented an immense angel, being the spirit of St. Peter delivering the keys of Heaven and Hell to the first Pope. Benches richly gilt, raised upon pilasters of yellow marble, and

drawn into the form of a half moon, occupied the body of the hall ; and here sat the cardinals, foreign ambassadors, prelates, and nobles.

At the head of the august room, beneath a canopy of crimson velvet surmounted with the orb and cross, was discovered the Papal chair ; it resembled, however, a throne, the magnificence of which was suited to the divan of an Eastern Emperor, rather than the judgment-hall of one of the successors of St. Peter, who in their humility are wont to style themselves “ the servants of the servants of the Lord.” High thereon, in a milk white stole bordered with silver lace, sat Clement the Sixth ; in his hand was a slender rod of gold, intended to represent the pastoral crook ; for the Pope is the good shepherd, and his flock the Christian world. The tiara, or triple crown, assumed only on extraordinary occasions, adorned his head ; it was composed of three circlets rising one above the other, and resplendent with gold and precious stones. Clement's person was tall and majestic, and his

look and deportment were not unworthy the exalted station which he occupied ; indeed his manners combined the suavity and grace of the polished courtier, with the solemn dignity of the austere ecclesiastic.

Near the Pontiff appeared two seats, gorgeous in their decorations, but inferior in splendour to his own : each, however, was elevated on a dais above the benches of the Cardinals, and possessed its canopy of cloth of gold. As yet these minor thrones were unoccupied, for they were appropriated to the two illustrious personages of the day—the Prince and Queen of Naples.

The representatives of the Potentates of Europe, and the various Ecclesiastics, were now assembled, and red hats, and gold-adorned mitres, gleamed above each other, like multitudinous waves seen at a distance flushed with the crimson sunset. The hum of voices, and rustling of ermined robes had ceased ; the ushers and other officers of the Consistory, had

assumed their stations at the principal entrance, and all was order and mute expectation.

There was something imposing, as well as deeply interesting, in the survey of so many illustrious persons congregated to pass judgment on two individuals, and those individuals the heads of a large nation. But while Pope Clement was glancing around on the living mass of beings before him, and indulging feelings of excusable pride at the consideration that he was spiritual lord of all, the folding doors on the left of his throne were slowly opened; a bishop advanced therefrom, whose vestments in splendour eclipsed those of all present, the Sovereign Pontiff alone excepted. From the horns of his mitre strings of pearls depended, and his scapulary was bordered with silver filigree work. Though his legs were concealed, his figure was evidently portly; and this circumstance, perhaps, enabled him to throw greater consequence and dignity into his manner. A person slender,

approaching to meagerness, with a little mantle flowing over his party-coloured doublet, walked behind him; the man carried a small silver shield, on which were emblazoned the arms of the King of Hungary; and gravity, which well accorded with the importance of his office, was depicted on his long and hollow countenance.

A hum and a whisper ran through the assembly, and several spoke audibly; "It is the Plenipotentiary of Hungary, Robert Bishop of Waradin!" But the prelate, regardless of the notice which he seemed to attract, ascended to his rostrum or bench, and deliberately seated himself on his velvet cushion; his sedulous attendant proceeded to arrange and smooth down his episcopal robes, and then, with becoming humility, faithful Forester placed himself behind him.

Scarcely had this passed, when another door, on the opposite side of the hall, was thrown

open, and the traduced, the beautiful Queen of Naples made her appearance.

Instantly every voice was hushed, every eye was rivetted upon Joanna. Her exalted station, her fame which had spread through Europe, and the nature of the crime of which she was accused, were circumstances well calculated to raise an intense interest in the breasts of the spectators. She advanced leaning upon her husband, and the venerable Bishop of Florence ; while the High Constable, Petrarch, Francisco de Baux, and a crowd of Neapolitan and Provençal Nobles followed. Joanna's dress was magnificent, and, in every respect, worthy of a Queen : the train of her crimson robe was borne by silk-attired pages ; her mantle was azure, the favourite colour of the house of Anjou, and on it the fleur-de-lis was embroidered in gold ; her right shoulder displayed the crosses of Jerusalem, for her grandfather. King Robert had laid claim to the sovereignty of Judea ; while

studded with jewels of highest price, and confining her luxuriant ringlets, glittered on her head the open crown of Naples.

Prince Louis wore little to distinguish himself from his Neapolitan Barons, except that, as consort of the Queen, a single circlet of gold was passed around his forehead; his gorgeous surcoat, however, was seeded at the edges with pearls, after the privileged fashion of royalty, while the arms of his house were emblazoned on the back and breast: his head was uncovered, and his sword, as on state occasions, hung in a white sheath.

The royal pair reached the centre of the judgment-hall; the unrivalled beauty of Joanna, and the Antinous-like figure, and elegance of mien, which distinguished Louis, excited in many present the liveliest admiration. The Prince and Queen made an obeisance in front of the Papal chair; then approaching the high dignitary who occupied it, they knelt at

his feet, and kissed the silver cross on his embroidered shoe.

The Grand Marshal of Provence, as his office directed, gave a sign for Prince Louis to station himself on the left hand of the Pontiff; and the Bishop of Florence led the Queen of Naples to her canopied seat on the right.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRIAL.

Anth. Most heartily I do beseech the Court
To give the judgment.

Merchant of Venice.

It is not our intention to enter into a lengthened detail of the proceedings of a trial which occupied many hours: if the reader would make himself acquainted with the minutiae—the accusations preferred, and the defence given—he must consult the old Chronicles: we shall therefore give only an outline of what transpired in the Consistory.

The renowned lawyer of Buda, Smolensko, opened the case as moved by the King of Hungary against Queen Joanna, and her husband.

In a learned and powerful manner, he expounded the nature of the accusation, and pointed out the circumstances which rendered the guilt of the impeached parties not only probable, but, in his opinion, a matter of absolute certainty. His head, the extraordinary magnitude of which has been adverted to, swayed to and fro ; his large saucer eyes seemed, in their comprehensive capability of vision, to take in the whole bench of Cardinals at a glance ; his stentorian voice filled the judgment-hall ; and ever and anon, in the heat of argument, he dashed back the massy locks of hair which covered his Atlas-like shoulders.

The twelve Hungarian witnesses brought forward by Robert, made their respective depositions. Their statements varied little from the tales which, on a previous occasion, we heard them recite before the Prelate. Huniades, who, it may be remembered, affected the Demosthenes, launched out upon the sea of oratory further than it pleased Robert ; for the latter

trembled lest he should commit himself. The worthy Huniades, however, after talking much respecting Hungarian justice, and the Senate of Zombor, of which he was a member; after enumerating the speeches he had made, and the books which he had written on laconic speaking, told his tale with such energy, earnestness, and suitable action, that while he amused, he astonished the assembly, and wrought upon the credulity of many. Indeed, the Cardinals thought that if only half of the statements made by those Hungarian place-men were correct, the criminality of Louis and Joanna would admit of little doubt.

The Bishop of Waradin, perceiving the impression which the testimony of his witnesses had created, hastened to follow up the advantage. He rose in his bench; he even stood on his velvet cushion, that he might the more completely be seen and heard. Forester held his silver crosier, while his holy master prepared to thunder like another Paul upon Mars hill. The poor

henchman thought not now of Amalia, and her sufferings, nor even of the doom of the English Captain. His figure was motionless ; his huge eyes were rivetted upon Robert ; and one would have imagined that his own welfare, fame, and life, depended upon the Bishop's meditated harangue. The distinguished office which Robert held as the representative of a powerful King, and the influence which he exercised over a large body of men, were sufficient to command general attention ; and throwing back his head, and extending his arms, he thus began :

“ Father of the Christian world ! eminent Cardinals ! illustrious Ambassadors ! and fellow Bishops ! I, lowly Prelate of Waradin, the humblest labourer in the vineyard of God, presume to greet ye ; peace, and the blessing of the Saints be yours !—surrounded by such an assembly, I would fain remain a listener, yea, seal up my mouth in silence. Howbeit, the important character in which I appear, even as plenipotentiary of the King of Hungary and Naples, constrains

me to lift up my voice, and perform his will.— Holy Primate of the west; the monarch whom I serve hath been greatly belied unto thee; he is a religious king, a most merciful king; and scrupulously honourable in all his actions. What though he hath seized upon Naples, hath he not wrested it from the hands of the wicked and unclean? for by homicide, and evil deeds, the late possessors thereof have utterly forfeited their rights. What though some blood marked his course, did he smite one man that was not a rebel? did he sack one town which held not out for the adulteress and murderer?"

"Prelate! thy words are bold!" exclaimed the Pontiff in a tone of authority: "But proceed; we govern our tempers—thou hast liberty to speak all thou dost desire."

"I am a man of peace," continued Robert, "and would wittingly give offence to none, although zeal for the truth may hurry me at times into language of warmth. Yet, illustrious Fathers! I come not hither with my witnesses

to defend the conduct of my royal master, but to prove to each and to all, fully and clearly, that yonder high-born persons, known by the names of Prince Louis and Queen Joanna, are guilty of the great wickedness imputed unto them. I may not express the sorrow, yea, anguish which I feel in thus appearing against them; but Cardinals, Ambassadors, and Bishops! seeing that I am convinced of their crime, how could I rise up, or sit down, with a quiet conscience, if I did not impeach them? how cry from my pulpit 'let justice and virtue fill the earth!' and yet spare the heads of a nation who are such flagrant transgressors!—yes, I tread in the path of my duty, and notwithstanding I may be persecuted, and deemed an austere man, I will still lift up my voice, and exclaim against every one who worketh iniquity, whether he be priest or layman, peasant or king!"

Robert paused at this climax, and cast his eyes around in exultation and defiance. Each face was turned towards him, and the Cardinals

appeared deeply attentive. Paleness overspread Joanna's countenance; the brow of Louis alone was flushed, and his breast heaved with a passion he could scarcely command.

“ Lights of Christendom ! representatives of the Princes of the earth ” ! pursued Robert ; “ I have no direct evidence of my own to adduce against the royal culprits ; but my witnesses ! my witnesses ! men of probity, who held stations immediately near their persons, they have stated sufficient to convince the most incredulous, and arouse the indignation of the most merciful. These witnesses, I say, composed the household of the Queen ; the crimes were committed, as it were, before their very eyes ; and I would especially draw attention to the very suspicious and criminal transaction, alluded to and described by the learned and eloquent Huniades.”

The Hungarian Demosthenes was seen to bow in acknowledgement of the compliment paid him by the reverend Bishop ; while he slightly

coughed, we will not suppose from a view to attract the attention of the assembly.

“ And now, most high and mighty Pontiff! and all ye who hear me! my royal master, even the King of Hungary and Naples, hath advised, and beseeched me to suggest the manner of punishment most befitting the criminals, for doubtlessly, in your minds, ye have already condemned them. Hear, then, illustrious judges! the King, although he smote with the edge of the sword their partner in guilt, the Duke of Durazzo, prayeth that some lenity be shewn unto the lord Louis and the late Queen of Naples; his bowels yearn in pity over their extreme youth; he would have them repent, and not die in the flush of sin; therefore he doth hope and pray that their sentence be no severer than banishment to some foreign land, or perpetual imprisonment in some guarded fortress. Nevertheless, if the punishment proposed seem not in your opinions, most eminent Cardinals, sufficiently severe, the King, through me, his servant, doth hereby fully and freely consent

that they die the death of homicides, and wicked malefactors : yea, only the axe and block, it may appear to many, can expiate their enormous crime.”

The Prelate ceased, and resumed his seat ; there being nothing further to urge in impeachment of Queen Joanna and Prince Louis, the case on the part of the prosecutor, the King of Hungary, was consequently closed. The hearts of many of the hearers sank within them, for the earnest manner, rather than the words of Robert, together with the nervous harangue of the counsellor of Buda, and the depositions of the several witnesses, had made a deep impression on the Consistory—and that impression was against the royal pair ! Joanna was calm ; her meek and dejected eyes glanced towards the august bench of Cardinals, and then were raised imploringly to the Pontiff. Louis exhibited a different demeanour ; he only saw his arch-enemy Robert, and his clenched hand, beating foot, and lowering brows, gave symptoms of an indigna-

tion, ready, like a dammed up torrent, to burst forth.

It was at this juncture that the voice of Clement was heard ; he did not, however, rise from his chair.

“ Robert, Bishop of Waradin ! we have given thee and thine an impartial and patient hearing ; it doth not become us, sitting here as judge, to endeavour either to refute, or uphold the assertions of thy witnesses ; and we shall make no comment upon thy own speech. The defence of the royal parties, we understand, will be undertaken by our servants, the Bishop of Florence and Signor Petrarch, assisted by certain juriconsults, learned in civil law ; to each of whom we have granted an especial license to speak before us in this our Consistory. In the name of God, we call upon them to stand forth ! ”

The Bishop of Florence, who was brother of Nicola Acciajuoli, was one of the most learned and eloquent men that the church in that age could boast ; so concise, yet powerful were his

arguments ; so completely did he prove that the self-styled witnesses of Robert were suborned and perjured men, that the Cardinals and Ambassadors felt they had been deceived, and foully played on, and that an infamous coalition and conspiracy existed on the side of the Hungarian accusers. But the Florentine Bishop, being argumentative rather than declamatory, did not dwell upon the injuries which Joanna and Louis had received, or appeal to the sympathies of his hearers ; this more agreeable task, and in which an orator might display his talents to greater advantage, was reserved for the Tuscan Poet.

As Petrarch arose in his bench opposite the Pontiff, a death-like silence pervaded the Consistory. The fame of the lover of Laura had resounded in all ears ; but some there had never beheld him ; and the interest which his appearance excited, was also enhanced by the opinion generally entertained, that he had retired to hide himself for the remainder of his days, in the solitudes of Vaucluse.

The oration which Petrarch made on this celebrated occasion, is not upon record : but we are authorized to describe the manner of the speaker, and the effects which his harangue produced. All bent forwards in their seats from an intense desire to hear him, and the breathing of each seemed to be suspended while he spoke. At first his diction was slow, and his voice subdued ; but as he proceeded, he declaimed more rapidly, and the spirit of Cicero appeared to inspire him. When he described the iniquitous proceedings of the King of Hungary and his coadjutors, his language was vehement and astounding ; and then dwelling upon the innocence of the Queen and her husband, and the bitter persecutions to which they had been subjected, he raised an universal sympathy, and melted all the assembly into tears.

The effect of Petrarch's oration was powerful and decisive ; in conjunction with the Bishop of Florence, he seemed to have thrown upon the question a blaze of light, and which revealed at

once the truth. The Ambassadors and Bishops murmured applause, and the Cardinals, who were the constituted judges, after a brief consultation, exclaimed with one voice : “ They are innocent ! they are innocent ! ” The Pope also cried upon his throne, “ Glory to God ! our children are without guilt ! ”

Joanna arose, and extended her arms, while tears filled her eyes ; her overwhelming emotions prevented her from returning her thanks to the friendly orators, and just judges ; but Louis with dignity and feeling, performed the task ; then turning to Robert, who, with his characteristic effrontery, remained calm and unmoved, he exclaimed :

“ To thee, Bishop of Waradin, in thy own person, the Queen of Naples and myself have nought to say, since thou art only the tool of thy tyrannical master, the King of Hungary ; but unto him who hath seized upon our kingdom, and basely endeavoured to attain our names, bear this message—I maintain him to be an usurper,

and a foul slanderer ! I challenge him before the world to meet me in mortal combat, at Avignon, at Naples, or on his own threshold in Hungary. In blood, if not in prowess, I am his peer ; and let the fate of Naples depend upon the issue of our strife.*

The foreign Ambassadors were loud in their applause of this chivalrous conduct ; and a Provençal herald immediately presented Louis's glove to Robert ; but the Prelate, affecting scorn, dashed it away, and spoke in a supercilious manner :

“ Young Prince ! slight youth ! howbeit, after the decision of this assembly, I may no longer add, at least here, another epithet to thy name ; learn to put a rein upon thy presumption ; dost thou imagine that my master, the lawful monarch of two kingdoms, can meet in the listed field a crownless, landless outcast like thee ? can he so stoop ? can he so un-king himself ?—away ! replace thy glove upon thy smooth hand. As Plenipotentiary of the Hungarian Sovereign,

I declare that what he hath gained, he will hold ; the lion's paw is on Naples, and neither the wolves of Provence, nor of combined Italy, shall scare him from his rightful spoil."

The wrath of Louis, at this insulting language, reached its height ; he laid his hand upon his sword, and would have sprung towards the Prelate, if Petrarch and Acciajuoli had not thrown themselves before him. They represented to him the sacred character of a bishop, and the privileged office which Robert held. Joanna, also, with many prayers, beseeched her husband to govern his indignation ; and at length Louis yielded to their united entreaties.

Pope Clement now waved his hand, and order and silence were restored. He arose from his chair, and stepping forwards from beneath the gorgeous crimson canopy, the Sovereign Pontiff spoke in a voice audible to all :

" Bishop of Waradin ! offer no further insult, speak no further word in this our Consistory ! depart to thy master, and inform him of all that

hath taken place. Louis, King of Naples and Count of Provence! receive back, in Christian peace and amity, the glove thou wouldst tender in defiance; chafe not, my son, at the conduct of the bad Monarch of Hungary, whom we ban, anathematize, and interdict. We now proclaim to the world, and order it to be published in all churches, courts, and places of resort, that the King and Queen of Naples have been examined before us in Avignon, and have been found by the sacred College of Cardinals, completely and entirely innocent of compassing the death of the late Prince Andrea;* and that they have pursued a line of conduct, amidst all their adversities and persecutions, most honourable, upright, and Christian. We also declare that if the Sovereign of Hungary, do not, within the space of three months, evacuate Naples, yielding up the throne thereof to its rightful possessors, we will preach

* Ses accusateurs furent confondus et ses juges deciderent qu'elle ne devait pas même être soupçonnée du crime dont on l'accusoit.—*De Sade.*

a crusade against him, and with the Chivalry of Christendom, utterly overthrow and destroy him and his lawless followers.—Cardinals! Ambassadors! and Bishops! our Consistory is dissolved!”

That evening, and deep into the night, Avignon exhibited a scene of rejoicing rarely before paralleled. Banners streamed from every tower along the old Norman walls; festive garlands decked the windows of all the principal houses; bells rang in every church and convent; the poor were publicly feasted, while couriers were dispatched to distant towns to proclaim the joyful intelligence of the acquittal of Queen Joanna, and her husband Louis.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HOSTELRIE.

Certes, fair sir, this house hath a pleasant and venerable look ; I am an antiquary, and would give a hundred ducats to know what coin was laid under the foundation stone.

Dodsley's Collection.

IN a quiet valley about ten miles from Avignon, and near the high road to Grenoble, a small hostelrie offered rest and cheer to the traveller. The building seemed to have numbered as many years as there were leaves on the old sycamore tree, which extended its gnarled and knotted limbs in front of the domicile ; thick moss and house-leek incrustated the sloping roof ; and ivy, equally determined that no portion of the original masonry should be seen, covered the sides,

chimnies, and gable ends. The day was far spent; from the western hills, slanting lines of yellow light glittered on the diamond-paned windows, and lingered warm on the rude stone porch, around which roses in full bloom were fantastically twined.

In front of the hostelrie, and beneath the spreading sycamore above mentioned, two men were seated; they spoke little, and each was differently employed. Mine host of the Black Saracen, for such was the fresher and haler person, was arrayed in scarlet doublet, and capacious hose; he was a little man as far as respected perpendicular measurement; but nature kindly made amends by obesity and girth of body, for what she lost in the more aspiring proportions of the human frame. The plump and happy Vintner was bending over a smooth stone or slate, whereon, with a bit of iron that might once have been the point of a dagger, he traced sundry arithmetical figures: from time to time he scratched his head, an action which in-

licated the abstruseness of his calculations ; and then, with a look of deep satisfaction, he would glance towards the further corner of his court yard, where, hung by his hind legs, lately slaughtered, a fatted calf. The other individual we have already made acquaintance with ; it was the fisherman of the Sorgia, old Rudel. Welcome to the board of publican and peasant on account of the news which he had ever to tell, Rudel was an especial favourite with the master of the Black Saracen, and to him alone mine host would present a cup of Rhenish without demanding payment.

The men had remained silent for some time, when Rudel placed his horn drinking-cup upon the table before them with a sharp knock, intimating that the vessel was empty, and himself not full. He then raised his little Provençal bonnet, and wiped his brows with the sleeve of his coarse jerkin.

“ Our Lady grant me grace, but this long trot on my ass from the good city of Avignon hath quite exhausted me. That wine of thine is

the best I have tasted for many moons; my master, Signor Petrarch's scarcely equals it, though his cellars boast the choicest produce of the hills of Italy. Fine wine that, Master Bumbére; it doth thy Black Saracen credit."

"Three and two make five, and one added to that is six—one livre—carry it out:" said the rotund publican in a soft tone of voice, while a smile of gratification overspread his broad rosy face.

"Hark'ee! Master Bumbére!" continued Rudel; "are all those strokes, or figures, as ye clerks call them, the calculations of only one day's work? certes, thou must thrive; fine times these with gentlemen of your profession! ye may well bless the Queen of Naples for drawing so many folks along these roads. Holy Madonna! how parched is my throat! yet thanks for thy thimble-full of Rhenish; I am sorry I cannot pay thee for it, but my last sol was spent in purchasing this blue ribbon, the badge of the Queen of Naples—glory to the Saints! she's

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acquitted; and I was the first to bring thee the news—think of that Master Bumbére!”

“ May the foul fiend seize thee, fisherman of the Sorgia !” growled the vintner; “ thou hast put me out;—so, three pounds of goat, and a young sucking pig—four livres; by the Virgin! my wife has not charged enough: but stay! underneath I perceive that the knight has left his dagger in pledge—ha! ha! those high folks, how awfully needy some of them are! by this light! Jacob Bumbére can buy and sell half of the nobles in Provence!”

“ I am sorry, worthy Monsieur Bumbére,” said Rudel, “ that thou dost seem so little rejoiced, considering the glorious result of the day. I have detailed to thee all the matter of the trial, as I heard it repeated in the Market-place; how the Bishop of Waradin was beaten, and how my master, Signor Petrarch, spoke as if a god had descended from heaven—why art thou not more elated?”

“ I elated?” exclaimed Bumbére, suspending

his calculations for a minute, and elevating his iron pencil to scratch the tip of his ear ; “ why should I be elated ? Prince Louis and Queen Joanna, for aught I know, are guilty ; for thy opinion in this affair, excuse me, Rudel, I cannot exactly adopt.—I elated ? my wife, though she writes like a clerk, I perceive by my stone here, has made this day charges far too low ; some of the gentles, also, in passing, have received refreshments, and only promised payment on their return. Out on the woman ! would I had never left the Black Saracen to visit my sick brother at Carpentras !—elated ? I am in a right bad humour—but drink thy wine, man, I charge thee nothing for it.”

Rudel returned no answer, but again knocked his horn cup upon the table.

“ S’death ! empty already ? ” exclaimed mine host, appearing for the first time conscious of the fact.

“ Ay, empty, Master Bumbére ; yet it is not for my own stomach’s sake, that I would ask thee

for another cup, but as I am a loyal man, I would fain drink to the prosperity of good Queen Joanna."

"Five, and three, and six—fourteen in toto—I thought, Rudel, that the great scholar, Petrarch, gave thee something handsome for embanking the river before his house the other day;—So, the whole amount is but thirty livres, when, had my wife been discreet, the sum would have reached fifty.—I can give thee no more wine gratis; henceforth, all thou dost drink thou must pay for, since thou hast money in thy chest at home—eh, sly Rudel?"

"Master Bumbére," said the persevering fisherman, "I have a terrible tale to tell thee—a tale of blood."

"A what?" asked the curious vintner, who relished excessively stories of a moving description.

"A tale of blood—the day is fixed for the execution;" and Rudel looked ominously on his open-mouthed friend.

“ What ! the execution of that awful robber and murderer, the English Captain ? when, good Rudel, when will it be ? ”

“ Hark’ee, Master Bumbére, I’ll inform thee when ; and more than that, I’ll take thee to the scene, ’an thou’lt only order my empty cup to be replenished.”

This could not be resisted—with a sonorous voice, mine host called to his wife in the porch, begging her to bring immediately a flask of the best Moselle ; but scarcely had the dame reached the table, her pretty daughter tripping forwards also, when the attention of the party was called off to another quarter.

A gilded chariot, and a cloud of horsemen appeared at the gate ; with many a call, and thundering knock, they demanded admittance : their appearance was not that of every day visitors to the Black Saracen, and Bumbére, in his hurry to wait on his new guests, forgot the tale of terror, overturned the table, and tripped up the old fisherman himself, who straining the

flask of Moselle in his hand, lay cursing the Saints and the avaricious vintner upon the turf.

“Fellow!” exclaimed one of the horsemen to Bumbére, as the latter stood bowing with his hat under his arm; “why art thou so tardy in opening thy gates? we would fain refresh ourselves in thy hall, and wash the dust from our throats.”

“Room there! room! let the chariot of his holiness pass!” and Forester, with his melancholy face, swaying his staff of office, advanced before the charioteers; he pointed out the exact place where the vehicle should stop, in order that the Plenipotentiary might alight opposite to the stone porch.

With much ceremony Robert descended from his chariot, and, as he passed forwards, he raised his hands to bless the landlady and her daughter, for Bumbére’s family, he believed, favoured the Hungarian cause. The Bishop gave his commands in a few words; his followers were to

regale themselves for an hour in the vintner's hall; while he begged Bumbére to shew him to a private room, and send to him a trencher of boiled peas, with a cup of cold water, that he might sup; "for alas;" said the worthy man, "the spirit prompteth me to fast, but the flesh, my son, is weak."

Many were the jests that circulated among the Hungarian witnesses, as they quaffed Provençal wine in mine host's best apartments. Indeed, they bore their defeat with the most philosophical resignation and good humour; they, at least, expected their reward, for they had performed their duty. Huniades made himself heard above all his comrades; and he re-spouted for the edification of the hostess and her daughter, the speech which he had delivered that morning in the Consistory.

Robert had no sooner gained his little retired room than he threw himself upon a seat; he was spent with the exertions of the day, and the agitation which his spirit had undergone. Pride

and chagrin would suffer him to remain no longer in Avignon, and, shaking the dust from his feet upon that city, he was now hastening, with all possible expedition, back to Hungary.

The thoughts which crowded Robert's bosom we attempt not to scan; but that bosom was black and unrepentant. The vexation he endured, in consequence of his signal defeat, heightened his thirst for vengeance on the Queen and her husband, and he inwardly exulted that he was able to gratify it: yes, the sister of Louis was in his power, and the passion which he entertained for that unfortunate being, seemed to have acquired a force commensurate with the strength of the darker and bitterer feelings which stirred his nature.

The reflections of the Bishop were disturbed by a gentle tapping at the door, and Bumbére, desirous of shewing every respect to his distinguished guest, appeared in person: he bore a trencher of boiled peas, and a silver cup sparkling to the brim with the purest cold water; a

small quantity of honey, too, in a jar, he produced as a relish; and these, with more ceremony than the occasion seemed to demand, mine host, who did not dare to speak, placed upon the table before the Prelate.

“ Thanks, my son !” said Robert; “ now order my henchman hither, for I have need of his presence.”

Forester in a few minutes entered the room; he was unusually thoughtful; and in spite of his endeavours to check his feelings, it was evident that he was much agitated.

“ What aileth thee, sirrah ?” said Robert; “ and wherefore dost thou look so alarmed ?”

“ I trembled,” answered Forester, as he produced a bundle from beneath his mantle; “ I trembled for your holiness, least I should be discovered; but here I have them wrapped in this cloth—a fat capon, and a flask of our strong Falernian.”

“ Ha! ha! I knew thou couldst do it without

detection—thou art such a clever knave. But where shall we hide these accursed peas, for Bumbére must imagine that I have eaten them? here, sirrah! open the side of thy doublet:" and Robert emptied the trencher of boiled peas into Forester's capacious pocket.

When the Servitor presented the flask of Falernian to his master, his hand trembled; yet he had not mixed poison in the beverage. The Bishop drank the wine, and then with a deep sigh of satisfaction, threw himself back for ease in his chair.

"Now, Englishman, in a half an hour we must resume our journey. We sleep at the next post-house, which is but a league, as thou dost know, from the cottage where *she* is lodged. Thou rememberest my orders—she is to follow in our train, concealed in that little close chariot; and let it be fully understood that she is a nun who, having fled from her convent in Hungary, has been detected by us here; and we are now con-

ducting her back to suffer the penalty due to her misdemeanour."

Forester bowed, but remained silent.

"This night," continued Robert, "while my followers are asleep, thou and I, in the small chariot, must proceed to the cottage: yea, neither saint nor fiend shall prevent me—this very night—"

Robert had spoken the last words with difficulty; a stupor came over him; he muttered indistinctly, and then, drooping his head, sank into a profound sleep. The Servitor's eyes sparkled as he beheld his master's situation, and he glanced cautiously around the room, like a man about to take some hazardous step. Yes, fate hung upon the moment, for Forester had at length come to the determination of violating his oath of fidelity, and quitting the service of the Bishop of Waradin!

In truth, we have seen, at various times, a great struggle maintained in the Englishman's breast,

between the good and the evil principle; the love of gold, in the first instance, had warped him from the path of rectitude; and subsequently he had been bound to the iniquitous Robert by a chain of stern necessity: but his remorse had become unendurable; it was stronger than the passion of avarice, stronger even than fear. His countryman, Walter Courtenay, was to suffer an unjust death, while it had been in his power to have proved his innocence; and this reflection added to the pangs which already harrowed up his soul. Not, however, until he had advanced several miles on the road which they were now travelling, had he determined, in his vacillating mind, to burst the fetters of his thralldom, to save Amalia, and also, if it were possible, the English Captain. He would have hastened back to Avignon, but feared that Amalia might fall into the hands of the licentious Robert ere succour could arrive. To mix a strong narcotic with Robert's wine, and thereby detain him a few

hours asleep at the inn, was of easy execution ; he might then hurry to the solitary cottage, and if he could succeed in freeing Amalia, and reaching Avignon before the morning, the life of Courtenay would not be sacrificed.

The first part of Forester's undertaking had been accomplished ; and now creeping softly forth from Robert's room, he declared that no one was to approach the Bishop for three hours, since his lordship felt very fatigued, and found it impossible to proceed on his journey before he had indulged in a little slumber. " Meantime," added Forester, " I am ordered to prick on my mule to yonder convent which stands in the valley, bearing despatches from his holiness to the reverend prior ; so, my masters, enjoy yourselves, and right merrily pass the wine-cup."

The fate of a high-born lady, and the life of a gallant soldier depended upon the success of our erring but repentant friend. Remorse, and a

sense of duty, had urged him into the right path, although at an hour when his services might be of little avail; yet Heaven forgive him, and prosper his last action !

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCERTAINTY.

Shall she escape in time to save
Her lover doomed to die?
Impatience to that moment gave
A whole eternity.

Old Song.

Four dreadful days had been passed by Amalia in the solitary cottage. The Hungarian troopers had been proof against her tears and entreaties; in vain she promised them a reward higher than that which their master could give; for they felt persuaded that if they delivered her up, instead of receiving a larger sum of gold, both Prince Louis and the Queen would be the first to doom them to the gibbet. Base men are in general the most cowardly; and guilt oftentimes appre-

hends detection and punishment, when there exists no ground for alarm.

The old woman who occupied the cottage, felt no compassion for her charge ; she believed, or pretended to believe the story of the run-away nun ; in short, so long as gold-pieces were thrust into the crone's pocket, she was ready to close her eyes to the truth, and connive at any atrocity.

It was deep in the night : Amalia had not ascended to the little dormitory ; but the woman, after vainly soliciting her to retire, mounted the rude ladder to her own bed, persuading herself that since egress was denied from the front room, where the two Hungarians kept watch, her weak and delicate prisoner could not by any possibility effect an escape. Amalia was looking through the narrow aperture which resembled a loop-hole more than a window ; it was profoundly silent ; the moonlight slept on the rocks, and the gigantic pines around ; each leaf was still ; each wild-flower, from the tall lily to the lowly hare-

bell, drooped its head surcharged with sparkling dew; and the tiny streamlet glanced and quivered amid the green moss, like a thread of silver, or a string of diamonds. The scenery around, so harsh, gloomy, and desolate by day, had assumed in the deep calm and tender light, a softened beauty, resembling the countenance of an assassin asleep, when dreams of innocent childhood delight his fancy, and benignity and love for a moment brighten over his haggard features.

Amalia thought of her desolate situation, and of the dreadful fate which awaited her; and if a ray of hope for an instant glimmered in upon her heart, it was only to be quenched again in the darkness of despondency. Through the horn window near the door of the room, she could see her two remorseless keepers; one of the men lay extended on a mat before a small fire, fast asleep, for, it would seem, they kept guard by turns. The other sat on a bench, with a half-emptied flagon of wine before him; a lamp

burned on the table, and its dull light fell obliquely on his swarthy whiskered face, and wild attire ; he appeared himself in a state not far removed from somnolency, yet manfully struggling with the approaches of the drowsy God : at one time he glanced at the bolts of the door ; at another hummed a low tune, drawing his sword from the scabbard to examine its edge, and then he applied himself to his drinking-cup. Amalia regarded him attentively for several minutes ; the man was evidently losing his consciousness of surrounding objects, and at last, to all appearance, he was buried in slumber as profound as that enjoyed by his companion before the fire.

The moment had arrived—could not the girl creep through their room and escape ? she endeavoured to open her own door, but, at once annihilating her hopes, she found it locked on the outside. Still Amalia continued to watch the troopers, and now she imagined she heard a

low knocking from without the cottage; it was repeated, and the dreaming Hungarian suddenly started into an erect posture; with his drawn sword he approached the door, and demanded who was there: whatever reply the party made, it was evident he was a friend, for the bolts were withdrawn, and the benighted visitor entered the hut.

Forester, for it was he, appeared to be on very friendly terms with the Hungarian soldier; he nodded, and shook him by the hand, pointing significantly at the wine-flagon, and at the trooper on the mat. These pantomimic actions being concluded, he begged the sentinel to resume his post at the door, while he sought the lady Amalia, to whom his master had commanded him to deliver a message of some importance.

Forester bent his knee as he approached Amalia; the latter was aware of his peculiar position with regard to the Bishop of Waradin, and felt grateful for the kind offices he had done

her on previous occasions: but the habitual melancholy of the poor fellow had now given place to intense trepidation and eagerness. Amalia augured the worst from his manner, and questioned him relative to the movements of his diabolical master.

“ He is my master no more !” Forester whispered in her ear ; “ I ask you not to forgive me ; my crime is beyond the reach of pardon ; but let me make a slight atonement for past offences—lady, I am come to save you !”

Amalia cast on the speaker a bewildered and incredulous look.

“ God bless you ! the Saints reward you ! can it be possible ?”

“ Exclaim not—obey me for one hour, and then I am your slave, and your prisoner for ever.”

Forester, in whispered words, gave Amalia a few directions which required her immediate attention, and he did not conceal from her the

fearful fact, that if they failed to reach Avignon by the morning light, Courtenay would be in another world.

The girl's dismay and agony at the information which Forester's last words conveyed, almost overpowered her reason, for hitherto she had known little respecting Courtenay's fate.

"Oh ! that thou hadst not come hither ! that thou hadst returned immediately to Avignon, and saved him, and left me to whatever might have been my destiny !"

"Honoured lady, forgive me, but my aim was to save you both."

"But how can we escape from this horrible spot ? have the Hungarian soldiers relented ? let us not waste a moment, but instantly rush away !"

"Hold ! for the sake of Heaven ! yonder men are not to be gained over, and they will never permit us to depart. Time indeed presses, but caution is necessary. Remain here ; I will leave your door unbolted ; and as soon as I give a low

whistle, then steal out, and with God's assistance we will flee to Avignon!"

Amalia listened to Forester's advice, and with a palpitating heart continued in the room.

The Servitor sallied forth, having completely gained his self-possession; he seated himself carelessly near the trooper, and began to jest with him, and drink from his flagon, intimating that it was his intention to remain in the cottage until the morning.

"Beshrew me, but thy comrade yonder hath either been hunting the wild boar in these forests, or thy Rhenish hath a most pleasant somniferous quality—ha! ha!"

Forester laughed, but his mirth was a mockery of the remorse, the sorrow, the fear, which shook his secret soul.

"Why friend," said the trooper, "a little sleep, methinks, is excusable, after a man has been watching all day, and half the night, in this infernal silent hole. I'll sing a dozen aves, and offer as many candles to our lady Mary, when

the good bishop comes to relieve us of this right stupid and irksome task :” and the soldier stretched his arms and yawned.

“ Don’t expect our master yet for at least a week ; but, good Ponoski, thou dost seem almost as greatly in need of the luxury of sleep as our neighbour. I am as lively and wide awake as a bee when the sun is out ; so look’ee, comrade, if thou’rt inclined for a nap, I don’t care if I hold for an hour or two thy halberd, and mount guard—there !”

The man looked full in Forester’s face, but saw nothing in those large eyes, calculated to excite a suspicion of any sinister motive on the part of him who thus promptly volunteered his services.

“ Marry, friend Forester, I think thou couldst after all, with this sword and halberd, contrive to keep a woman in durance ; at all events, should the bird attempt to fly from her cage, thou canst prick us up. I thank thee for thine offer, and will join my comrade for a few minutes

by the fire, for I am as drowsy as a snake in winter."

Forester's heart seemed as though it would burst his bosom, and it was with inexpressible delight that, in a short time, he heard the first sonorous intimations of somnolency from the last trooper. He cautiously took the lamp, and in order to ascertain that no deception was practised, passed the light several times before the faces of the men; but no winking, or movement of the muscles declared their slumber to be counterfeited. His hand was now upon the iron bolts of the front door; they grated as he drew them back—he suspended his task in breathless agitation, looking over his shoulder, and expecting every moment to see the troopers spring up. He renewed his efforts—the last fastening was overcome, and the door stood open!

Forester gave the signal he had proposed, and, the next instant, Amalia's fragile figure was seen emerging from the inner room. Well might she tremble, for she had to pass close beside her

slumbering enemies; her dress even touched them as she moved by; but that step was as light as the step of the queen in the fairy tale, who could walk on the "unbending heads" of flowers; yet she shivered with terror, and could almost hear her own heart-throbs. The room was passed—the doorway was gained, and, with Forester, she now rushed out into the quiet moonlight!

Fear mingling with joy, seemed to give Amalia wings, as she hurried after her silent guide; their fate still hung on a breath, on a sleeper's dream, for if the Hungarians awoke, and found them missing, their first act, there could be little doubt, would be to follow them. The fugitives reached a glade in the wood, where they found Forester's mule tied to a tree. He threw his mantle over the saddle, which being fashioned according to the style of the country, was adapted to a male or a female rider. On trotted the faithful animal, and Forester ran by its side. He hoped to baffle their enemies by pursuing a

road to Avignon seldom traversed; and he beseeched Amalia to be of good cheer, assuring her that they should reach the city before the morning, and consequently be in time to save Courtenay from the death which had been so erringly adjudged him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DISCOVERY.

To horse! to horse! our prey is fled!
Spur, spur o'er Rother Downs!
I'll give the man who brings his head,
A thousand silver crowns.

Stop not for river, stone, or brake;
Success must crown your pains,
For if ye fail the wretch to take,
Ye hang yourselves in chains.

Old Ballad.

AN hour might have elapsed, when one of the Hungarian troopers who had been enjoying their dreams by the fire, cast off his heavy sleep, and, raising himself on his elbow, gazed around the hut. It was the man who had indulged himself the greatest length of time, and being ignorant of Forester's late arrival, he was not a little sur-

prised at finding his fellow sentinel stretched on the mat beside him.

“ Ponoski !” he cried, shaking his companion, but the latter, half awakened, growled and swore at being so roughly disturbed, and then laid his head again on his arm, with an intention to resume his slumber.

“ Man, art thou mad ? rouse thyself ! we must sleep only by turns—St. Stephen, and the devil ! is this the way to guard our master’s prize ?”

“ Now pest on thee, for a fool ! dost think I’m such a sorry knave as to desert my post without a substitute—a man to mount guard in my place ? pshaw ! don’t disturb me, friend.”

“ Substitute ? mount guard in thy place ? who might do such an office for thee, I am puzzled to know : thou art still in the land of dreams, comrade.”

“ Now look’ee, I have given my halberd to Forester, and my lordship’s pretty donzella being under lock and key, where’s the danger, if both

of us take a nap together on these long and doleful nights ?”

The first trooper, under an apprehension that some treachery had been practised by his companion, sprang upon his feet.

“Forester ! ho ! Forester !” but no answer was returned to his loud and eager call. He glanced at the inner door, and by the dull light of the oil lamp, perceived at once that the bolts had been withdrawn.

“Ten thousand furies !” shouted the man rushing into the room, the scene so recently of Amalia’s trepidation and anguish. Ponoski, the duped sentinel, immediately followed him.

“Of a surety, this is marvellously strange ;” exclaimed the latter.

“Strange ! here’s treachery, hellish treachery ! either Forester or thou art a false knave.”

“Comrade,” said Ponoski, “thou art too hot ; thy speech is scarcely civil.”

“What I have affirmed, I repeat. Thou hast

leagued with this Forester, whom I ever suspected of being a rogue, to allow the girl to escape. I shall lose my reward ! I shall forfeit my life !—Perfidious scoundrel, deny what I accuse thee of, if thou canst !”

The speaker, in a paroxysm of rage, collared his companion, and the men, venting curses on each other, grappled fiercely together. They drew their daggers, and blood would have been shed, had not the old woman, hearing the noise of the struggle, descended quickly from the little dormitory above.

“ What ails you, gentlemen ? what ails you ? blows ? daggers ?—ye have been drinking too much wine—put up your weapons, I beseech you, and cease this brawling. Saints in Heaven ! ye will murder each other.”

The soldier, whom his fellow had wrongfully accused, now thrust his opponent violently from him. “ Dame !” he cried, “ the lady is above, I warrant, after all.”

“ Above, master ? no. I left her in this room, guarded and watched by you. If any thing has happened amiss, ye’ll have to answer for it—mercy on my soul ! where can she be ?” and the old woman ran about the hut, peering into corners, and examining whether the horn windows had been forced. A sudden exclamation brought the troopers to her side.

“ Look ye here, my masters ! do ye know this ? the front door is open. No woman could have removed these heavy iron bars, that I’m confident. She is gone—fled—fools ! ye have allowed some one to carry her away.”

“ We know she is gone, mother ;” said Ponoski ; “ but Forester is the villain who has cozened and betrayed us all. Comrade, to convince thee that I am innocent of having plotted with the scoundrel, I’ll e’en forgive thee thy slanderous words, and the wrong thou hast done me. Marry, have I not a reward to receive, and a head to lose, as well as thyself ! how then should I connive at the lady’s escape ? but we

waste time and breath—every moment is precious ; let us instantly pursue the runaways.”

“ In what direction shall we ride ? what road can they have taken ? ” exclaimed the second trooper all alacrity.

“ The road to Avignon, I’ll stake my life on’t ; but Forester’s mule is swift of foot—haste thee, friend, haste along ! ”

The men hurried out of the cottage, and bringing forth their horses from the rude shed of pine-branches which had been erected by the side of the domicile, they mounted without delay ; in a brief time they emerged from the more tangled part of the forest, and were galloping, with the utmost speed, towards Avignon.

* * * *

We have said that Forester, anticipating a discovery and pursuit, chose a road little known to the general way-farer. Not only the Hungarian troopers, but the immediate followers of Robert who, no doubt, ere this, was acquainted with the infidelity of his Servitor, were the objects

of his terror. Yet suffering not his apprehensions to paralyze his energies, he made all the expedition possible, and, through the rough and intricate paths, goaded on the mule which bore Amalia.

The moon was setting, and a deeper shade was falling over the solitary and wild scenes which surrounded them: nothing, however, occurred as yet to check their course, or overthrow their hopes; but having proceeded at a rapid rate for some fifteen miles, the mule began to show symptoms of flagging, while Amalia, overcome by excitement, as much as fatigue, bent over her saddle, leaning for support on the animal's neck. Forester, likewise, although a strongly-knit, and bony man, felt of necessity the approach of weariness, for it must be remembered, he travelled on foot; yet he regarded little what he himself might suffer; he thought only of her who was beneath his protection, and of the doom which awaited the Englishman.

But the mule now halted, and Forester knew

the disposition of the sagacious creature too well to compel him, by hard flogging, to proceed against his inclination. In order therefore to afford him a little relief and rest, he removed Amalia from his back, and conducted him to a brook that bubbled near; at the same time, he drew from his pouch a flask containing wine, of which Amalia did not hesitate to drink. The docile mule, after bathing his fetlocks in the stream, and cropping for a few minutes the green herbage, appeared so much refreshed, that Forester resolved without further delay to prosecute their journey. Accordingly the fugitives were again hurrying along the silent and sequestered path. Many an anxious look did Amalia cast towards the eastern horizon, in the expectation of perceiving the first blush of morning; and many a question did she put to Forester respecting the distance they might then be from Avignon. With every weary mile they passed, the dread of being overtaken by their enemies

affected them less, and hope grew stronger in their bosoms.

“ God be praised !” cried Forester ; “ we have reached the Rhone at last—our journey is more than half completed.”

“ But see ! the east reddens ; oh ! let us on faster, faster !—every minute seems an hour—every mile a league. Forester, we may arrive at the city yet too late !”

As these words fell from Amalia’s lips, they approached the gorge or entrance of a narrow valley, through which the path wound. Forester suddenly started, for his quick ear detected the sound of coming feet, and the murmur of voices. He seized the reins of the mule, but before he could communicate his apprehensions to Amalia, or draw the animal on one side of the road, they were surrounded by a number of men. Whether they were the Hungarian troopers, who, in company with some peasants of the district, might have overtaken them ; or whether they

formed a part of Robert's advancing cavalcade, no time was allowed the unfortunate travellers to ascertain : the foremost man, with an iron pike, dashed Forester to the ground ; and the others, without ceremony, dragged Amalia from her mule.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PRISONER.

" He trembled not though Death was near,
And seemed to whisper in his ear,
 Bold warrior ! come with me !
Thy sword, thy shield shall nought avail,
My shaft shall pierce thy iron mail,
And o'er thy head the wintry gale
 Will murmur mournfully."

IN conformity with the order of Prince Louis, the English Captain had been removed from his dungeon beneath the Palace, to a room of ampler dimensions, and of less gloomy appearance. From the grated window he could behold the Rhone, the city of Avignon, and, beyond these, the green hills of Languedoc. Courtenay had passed a tranquil night, nor had his eyes been unvisited by slumber. Now that his doom was

decided, he was no longer racked by anxiety, but his spirit enjoyed a sad yet stern composure. It is the coward who shrinks and agonizes as death draws near ; who grows frantic ; on whose forehead stands the cold sweat, and who cries for one day more ere he be torn from all which nature clings to. A man may possess natural affections ; he may contemplate a future world with its untold dreadful mysteries, yet, like the hero of this story, banish fruitless lamentation, and calmly await the stroke of fate.

Courtenay was walking thoughtfully to and fro before the grate of his prison. That morning he had paid a more than usual attention to his dress. It may be a foible to regard personal appearance on the brink of the grave, but the lowest criminal will express a desire to pass out of the world in decent apparel. Courtenay's hose and velvet doublet were worn tight to his person, displaying a figure of perfect symmetry ; around his waist was wound a rich crimson scarf ; his neck was bare, where soon the fatal

axe would do its work; and his head, with its short jetty curls, remained uncovered.

The sun was up; the dew was sparkling on the grass, and the countless flowers which breathed their fragrance near his prison; and he could plainly hear the mellow and joyful notes of the winged inhabitants of the air, as far above in Heaven's deep and tender blue, they poured forth their matins to Him who renovates earth for their subsistence, and illumines the sky which is their palace.

He glanced over nature as wide and far as his vision would permit; and he seemed to be taking a last survey of its beauties. He gazed on that sun with his brow of splendour, never tiring in his course, walking the heavens, their monarch and their God. He beheld the green hills laughing in the freshness and beauty of spring; the woody vallies, with the bright streams that wandered through their bosoms; recalling to his heart days of childhood and innocence—and to all he must say, farewell! Other

eyes will gaze on those scenes, and admire their loveliness, when *his* are closed for ever.

The prisoner turned from the grate; a different train of thought occupied his mind: smiles illumined his countenance, but soon they gave place to an expression of poignant sorrow.

He felt the ignominy of his doom. Rather would he have perished by flood or fire; rather would he have been torn to pieces by wild beasts, than be exhibited a gazing-stock to the crowd, the mark of derision, his name attainted, and his memory blackened. Then he thought of Amalia, and the conviction that she was ruined, or probably existed no more, filled his heart with an anguish that crushed and overpowered his every stoical resolution. He sank on a bench in the corner of his cell, and buried his face in his mantle. A softness came over him, but the very drops that agony wrung from his eyes warned him of the dangerous weakness to which he was yielding. Men must not behold him thus. He manned himself, and soon evinced

his former self-possession, and heroic composure.

The door of the prison opened, and a man, arrayed in a cloak of more than ordinary dimensions, slowly advanced ; his form was erect, and his step stately : he was a soldier, and doffing his helmet which was surmounted by a Roman eagle, Courtenay recognised the veteran Camillo.

“ Honoured Captain ! be not surprised at my intrusion ; I come not like the Gaul of old, who entered the dungeon of Marius, bearing the assassin's dagger ; my purpose is not to take away, but—to save thy life.”

“ Prithee, good Camillo,” said Courtenay, “ how may this be possible ? hast thou the means even thus late of proving my innocence ?”

“ I believe thee a guiltless, and an injured man ;” answered the Roman ; “ I believe—my power goes no further, for lacking the evidence that might warrant and support my opinion, Prince Louis will not be convinced by me.—

Wishing to do thee a good office, I prevailed upon the gaolers to permit me to pass into thy prison ; I informed them that I desired to take leave of him by whose side I had fought in the great battle of Aquila."

" I am sensible of thy kindness," said Courtenay ; " thou art come, then, Camillo, to say farewell to an old companion in arms."

" No ! by the soul of Trajan, no !—" and the Roman dropped his voice, drawing himself up by Courtenay's side—" Listen to me ! I am nearly thy height—just thy figure—doff then thy garments, and exchange them for mine ; moreover this cloak will assist the deception : the thing may be done in the counting of a rosary bead ; close this visor, grasp this battle-axe, and by the gods ! thou mayst stalk out through the guards unchallenged, and unnoticed. Thou knowest the rest—the world is before thee—fly ! fly ! for life."

There was silence—Courtenay answered not ;

the means of avoiding death were in his power : few, perhaps, would have resisted such a temptation ; but pride and knightly honour, stifled in Courtenay's breast the voice of nature. He was condemned for a crime—shall he confess himself guilty by flying the punishment which justice seemed to have awarded him ? Louis, also, had permitted him to walk in his prison without fetters, relying upon his faith ; shall he meanly, basely take advantage of this lenity ?—never !

Courtenay grasped the old Roman by the hand—" Thanks, generous Camillo, who wouldst expose thyself to danger on my account. I feel grateful to thee for thy kind offer, yet I cannot avail myself of it. No, situated as I am, were an earthquake to level my prison walls, I would not effect my escape ; I would deliver myself into the hands of Prince Louis, that he might place me in a new dungeon. To gain life by means of a breach of faith and honour, were in-

deed to render myself the poltroon, and the villain my accusers believe me."

Camillo was surprised ; he had imagined that Courtenay would have eagerly embraced his proposal. In vain for precedents he thought of the deeds of classic heroes. Again he addressed the prisoner, speaking in a tone of increased earnestness.

" Brave Englishman, I admire and yet I condemn thy notions and principles. I cannot believe that under all the circumstances, it would be derogatory to thine honour, if thou wert to escape the axe of the executioner in the manner I advise. Oh ! then listen to my prayer ! whether thou art innocent, or whether thou art guilty, still my counsel is, live ! live ! Think not that any injury or punishment will be inflicted on me ; I know Prince Louis's heart ; he will obtain a pardon for me. You waver—you will fly—now, then, now !"

Camillo divested himself of his cloak, and

raised his helmet in his hand, as though he would have placed it on Courtenay's head, but the latter turned away :

“ Tempt me not—I will not quit this cell : Camillo, I fear not to die.”

“ Then my supplication is in vain,” said the Roman, perceiving that the Englishman's resolution was not to be shaken ; “ and in spite of my efforts to save thee, thou wilt perish. I can but mourn for thee—I can but remember thee in my prayers—God give thee strength in the last and trying hour !”

Courtenay embraced the honest Roman, whose eyes were filled with tears. He felt that he should not quit the world without having the sympathy of some, or leaving kindly remembrances to be cherished in a few bosoms ; and this conviction was not without its consolation.

Camillo had departed, and about an hour had elapsed, when some of the officials attached to the prison, entered the cell ; a priest was in attendance, and with the usual formalities,

they acquainted the criminal that his time was come.

“ I am prepared,” said Courtenay in a calm voice ;—“ lead on !”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PONTIFF.

" His robes of state were laid aside,
His lip no longer curled with pride ;
Smooth was his front, and mild his air.
The man, and not the priest, was there ;
He talked with those he loved the while,
As others talk, and sigh, and smile."

MEANTIME, Pope Clement was seated in one of the saloons of his palace ; sorrow obscured the wonted sunshine of his benignant countenance. Near him on couches of cloth of gold and silver tissue, were Queen Joanna and Louis. The happy result of the late trial did not that hour elevate, or gladden their hearts ; he to whom they owed so much, was about to pass the fearful bridge which connects time with eternity. Joanna bent her head in silent grief, and Louis,

with an anxious eye, gazed on the thoughtful and troubled brow of the Pontiff.

“ Prince and Queen of Naples,” said Clement, “ we are happy that ye have been pleased to visit our residence this day ; and we will be ever accessible unto you, our friends and children. Ye have recently had occasion to rejoice, but now a cloud overshadows you ; yet remember a sun remains behind the veil of gloom, and its light will again beam forth.”

“ August father, not until our sister be found.”

“ And which,” added Queen Joanna, “ may never be.”

“ Nay, do not despair ; would it were in our power to render you consolation on this point ! yet we will not give credit to the rumour of which ye speak, that the lady has been barbarously assassinated ; on the contrary, we believe that when he who instigated his soldiers to bear her away, shall have ceased to live, the Princess Amalia will be restored unto you.”

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HOUR OF TRIAL.

" Brief has been the warrior's life,
Passed in glory, love, and strife.
Now his mortal sands are run,
Now his high career is done,
On his errors do not dwell,
But his good deeds only tell ;
Weep for him, the young and brave,
Scatter flowers above his grave."

It is a truth universally allowed, and daily exemplified, that both sexes, as well as all ages and conditions, experience pleasure in witnessing tragic scenes. Among the humbler orders of the community, a pugilistic encounter ; a dreadful fire destroying property and lives ; and, more than all, the gibbeting of a felon, attract a crowd beyond the grandest exhibition of nature or art.

It is not that wanton cruelty is inherent in the natures of the uneducated masses ; but men in general are so constituted, that they love scenes which greatly move them, even if it be to terror ; and which strike the cords of sympathy, although it be to elicit sighs and tears.

At sunrise, the gates of Avignon had been thrown open, and people of all descriptions crowded forth : mechanic and waterman, barber and publican, jostled each other ; the child ran by the side of its mother, and even old age grasped his staff, and tottered on. Some were mirthful, others sad ; but all had one object in view—they went to witness the end of the renowned English Captain.

It was the wish of the Avignese authorities, that Courtenay's execution should be as public as possible, in order that his punishment might be a dreadful warning to the knights and nobles of Provence, and elsewhere, who, incited by passion, might contemplate such a crime as the abduction of a lady of royal birth. Accordingly,

a scaffold had been erected about a half-a-mile from the city, where the ground being level and extensive, admitted the assemblage of many thousands.

Two men, whose rosy countenances and robust frames bespoke them countrymen, were hurrying over the plain.

“ So, we are in good time ; we may slacken our pace ;” exclaimed the stouter personage, panting hard, and holding his sides : “ See ! the people are still buzzing out of the city ; what a black swarm of them there is yonder ! as I live, Master Rudel, there stands the scaffold ! Well, I swore I would never again leave the Black Saracen to the care of my wife ; but our Lady forgive me ! this sight flesh and blood could not resist—ha ! ha ! we shall have a rare treat on’t.”

The fisherman, neither gay nor sad, doffed his bonnet, and wiped his brows.

“ Why, sooth to say, respected friend, the bustle in yonder city seemed not half so great yesterday, when an illustrious Prince and Queen

were tried and declared innocent. How the people like to gaze on any thing that's ghastly ! but this Englishman, as I hear, was a terrible fellow, Master Bumbére."

The honest Vintner's thoughts suddenly flowed into a different channel.

" Yes," he exclaimed, " I will dismiss my fears ; I will believe that the good Bishop will remit me the money from Hungary.—So, twelve witnesses—six fat capons between them, and thirty flasks of prime Moselle—at the least, 'tis twenty livres."

" Out on thy capons, flasks and livres !" growled Rudel ; " think of the gallant soldier, and mourn for his fate."

" I mourn ? I am not come to Avignon to mourn, Master Rudel, but to enjoy the jolly sight.—Ah ! who should have suspected that sly rogue Forester ? he strove, it would seem, to poison the holy man, and then decamped with all his money. I thought the good Bishop would never have shaken off his slumber ; but

when he did, Saint Stephen ! how he stormed ! yet, by the foul fiend, I care little whether he overtook and seized that villain Forester or not, so he remit me the twenty livres."

"No more on't, I say;" muttered the fisherman: "in that affair lurks some mystery which neither thou nor even I can fathom. Behold! what a mass of beings is gathered upon the heath! I long to see how the great Captain, whose valiant hand has deprived so many of life, will support his bravery when called upon to die himself."

"Pshaw! support his bravery!" observed the vintner; "what matters that? I hope there will be a great commotion in the crowd, and a fine bloody scene; for that's what I love, that's what I left the Black Saracen for, Master Rudel."

Thus speaking, our worthy friends reached the spot of rendezvous, and mingling with the throng, their colloquy was of necessity suspended.

An execution for a crime of so uncommon a

nature, together with the celebrity of the criminal, might well excite universal interest. Not only the undistinguished vulgar, but burghers of the more opulent class, and knights on their steeds, were there. The whole multitude formed a ring, and was prevented from pressing forwards by stakes driven at intervals in the ground, and secured by cords. In the centre of the circle, stood the scaffold which was hung with black cloth, and guarded at each point by yeomen in red liveries, with axes and halberds in their hands.

There was a hum of voices like the murmur of distant waters, for thousands were communicating their feelings and sentiments to each other. The strictest order, however, prevailed ; for the crowd was overawed by the presence of a large body of Papal troops. Some time had elapsed, and impatience was beginning to be manifested by the expectant multitude, when a lugubrious strain of music was heard ; it came from the fortified palace by the

Rhone, and announced that the criminal was approaching.

Moving towards the scene of death, between two files of soldiers, Courtenay at length appeared. Every eye was turned towards him. He walked with a slow, but firm step; his hands were manacled, and his head and throat were bare. The guards by his side held their swords drawn, and a priest, with a black cross in his hand, preceded him.

As Courtenay advanced, the crowd which blocked up the entrance of the barriers, fell back; and being conducted within, he stood at the foot of the scaffold. Though pale, his countenance betrayed neither agitation nor fear; but while his bearing was proud, he did not exhibit that air of recklessness and defiance, assumed by some criminals, who would have men believe them stoically brave at the trying hour of death.

Two officials offered to assist Courtenay in mounting the steps of the scaffold, but he as-

cended without their proffered help. He stood displayed to the gaze of anxious thousands ; some sympathised with his fate, but others felt a secret pleasure at his downfall. The veil of eternity was about to be raised ; awful situation for a mortal being ! dread prospect of existence beyond the tomb ! the flesh will shrink at the fearful change, however undaunted the soul.

There was the block, and yonder, leaning upon his axe, stood the masked headsman. But the priest now opened his book, and commenced reading, in a solemn voice, the service for the dead. Courtenay was deeply attentive ; he gazed earnestly on the churchman, and repeated the prayers after him.

This mournful ceremony being concluded, the priest approached the culprit, and inquired whether he would yet confess his crime ; since if he were truly contrite, the church would grant him absolution, and masses should be said for the rest of his soul. Courtenay returned him thanks, but could not receive absolution on the

condition of criminating himself; and therefore if the father had no other terms to offer, as he had lived, so he must die.

“Obstinate traitor! lost heretic!” exclaimed the priest; “since thou wilt not confess, then, I must even give thee over to the perdition thou dost merit. Nevertheless, if thou desirest to say aught to the beings of this world, before entering another, thou art allowed, for a few minutes, liberty to speak.”

Light flashed to Courtenay's eye; he would fain bid farewell to those around, but doubted his power to articulate. His features were unruffled indeed, but he were more or less than human, if no dreadful feelings worked within. A coldness was around his heart; his nerves tingled, and he choked almost to gasping; but with that effort which, in extremity, we can sometimes exert, he mastered in a measure his fearful emotions; and stepping forwards to the edge of the scaffold, his fine symmetrical figure reared to its utmost height, he spoke in a distinct voice.

“ Knights, and men of Provence ! a dying man addresses you ; he is condemned as guilty, but that the imputed crime rests not upon him, God at the last day will show. I forgive my accusers : my sentence appears just unto them who award it, therefore I do not consider them my murderers. May peace and prosperity smile upon this land ! may the Prince and Queen, in whose service I have fought, speedily regain their lost kingdom !—would that it were mine still to battle in their cause !—this may not be ; when the chivalry of Europe shall be pouring upon Naples, my hand will be nerveless, my heart cold, and for wreaths of fame, ignominy will darken over my grave. But though the truth may never appear ; though eternal shame may be my lot ; again I declare with my last, my expiring breath, I am innocent of the crime for which I suffer. And now, farewell ! high and low, all that are gathered here ! may God forgive the errors of a brief, but tumultuous life ! —headsman, I am ready ! ”

As Courtenay concluded, several in that wild crowd seemed melted to compassion; the elder soldiers observed a mournful silence, and tears stole down the cheeks of many a rough burgher. Although they might have been convinced of the justice of his doom, all who possessed the hearts of men, felt pity for one so young, and magnanimous.

But a sudden movement was now observed among the multitude; a cry was raised, being caught up and repeated by innumerable voices, and before Courtenay had approached the block, a man on a powerful charger had forced his way through the mass of spectators; in his hand he carried a small white banner, while the cognizance which he wore, and his peculiar costume, denoted him to be an officer of the Pope. He now rode through the barriers which encircled the scaffold, and elevating the white flag, cried aloud :

“ Suspend the execution !—it is the will of the Sovereign Pontiff—suspend the execution !”

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST SCENE.

Mal. I would the friends we miss were safe arrived.

Sir. Some must go off, and yet by these I see,
A day like this is cheaply bought.

Macbeth.

THE interruption given to the proceedings of death created the utmost confusion and excitement ; each person was eager to ascertain what the Papal officer had to divulge ; but all he knew, or had authority to state was, that the marshals, without delay, were to conduct the prisoner to the judgment-hall in the Pontiff's palace. In conformity with the order, Courtenay descended from the scaffold, and, accompanied by the officials, proceeded to the mansion of Clement.

Courtenay entered the gothic doorway of the

half-castellated and magnificent building; but when he reached the great hall, a scene he had little anticipated, opened on his view: in his accustomed chair, sat the spiritual ruler of the Christian world. Queen Joanna and Louis stood near him, the latter supporting a lady pale, agitated, and fainting; and that lady, need we add? was Amalia. Shrinking, and bowed down by the consciousness of guilt, his garments torn, his body lacerated and bleeding, Forester appeared in the back ground: Petrarch, Boccaccio, and the Constable of Naples, together with several Cardinals in their red hats, and scarlet simars, were also present.

The tale had been told by the delinquent Servitor; and the importance of the occasion, and the agony of his mind, instead of overwhelming him, had given his tongue an eloquence it never before possessed. His delay with Amalia, the reader is aware, had been occasioned by an attack made upon them by some armed men; but these ruffians were neither the Hungarian

troopers, nor did they belong to the train of the Bishop of Waradin ; they were merely marauders of the district ; and having despoiled their victims of all they possessed, they hurried off : some hours, however, elapsed, ere Forester recovered from the stunning effects of the blows which he had received.

On reaching Avignon, Amalia was in a state of utter exhaustion ; Forester would have rushed on at once to the place of execution, but he well knew that, unaccompanied by an order from the civil or ecclesiastical authorities, no word which he, an obscure and mean person, might have uttered, would have had the effect of staying the course of the law. He had consequently no alternative but to proceed to the Pontifical palace ; and his presence there in company with Amalia, will account for what has transpired.

Courtenay, in a few minutes, was made acquainted with the truths that others knew ; but as far as concerned his own fate, no sudden joy lit his features, no exultation was on his

brow ; the guilty man only pours forth his thanks, or faints in raptures, when his life is unexpectedly spared. He stood in a thoughtful attitude, his eyes bent on the ground ; and as the sunbeams which fell through the lofty painted window, streamed on his bare-head, and bronzed noble countenance, all seemed to regard him with interest and admiration. Clement, for the first time, beheld the renowned Englishman ; but strange emotions appeared to agitate him, and forgetful of his dignity, he half started up from his gilded chair.

“ Holy St. Peter !” he murmured audibly ;
“ whom do we behold !—yes, it is he !”

Queen Joanna, hearing the Pontiff’s exclamation, inquired whether Courtenay was known to him ; but Clement’s manner suddenly changed from astonishment to real or feigned indifference.

“ It matters not, daughter,” he said ; “ it matters not ; we ween, however, that the soldier right well knoweth ourselves.”

While this was passing, Louis had advanced

to Courtenay ; and the varied emotions which struggled in his breast, almost choking his utterance, he exclaimed :

“ Noble Englishman ! what injuries hast thou received ! a deed committed by the darkest hypocrite, and foulest villain that earth contains, I have been foremost in laying to thy charge. Canst thou, brave companion-in-arms, canst thou forgive me ? ”

“ Prince Louis,” answered Courtenay, “ thou hast done nothing which calls for my pardon ; since I, as well as others, know that thou hast acted only as honour and justice dictated. Let us rather thank Almighty God that the mystery is at length solved.”

Louis, who could contain his bursting feelings no longer, wrung Courtenay’s hand, and in sight of that august company, the two embraced like brothers.

One sentiment only existed in the bosoms of all present, with respect to the hypocritical, and infamous Robert ; but since the wretched man,

and all his creatures, were by that time far advanced on their road to Hungary, pursuit would have been unavailing; satisfaction and vengeance, therefore, were to be obtained at some future time. But Forester, the guilty Forester was present, and condign punishment might, at least, be inflicted on him. With head bowed on his breast, and eyes that feared to meet the gaze of his judges, he now stepped forwards, and fell at the feet of Louis. For the iniquitous part which he had performed, in so long abetting his late master in his crimes, and above all, for not divulging at an earlier period, Robert's last diabolical action, he declared himself ready—even desirous to render an atonement.

“ Let me suffer,” he cried, “ the death which had been designed for the brave English Captain! I merit not, I expect not mercy.”

Louis gazed with feelings of compassion on the poor fellow trembling, and cowering before him.

“ Forester,” he said, “ guilty indeed we know

thee to have been, but thou wert warped to crime by the spells of a demon. Thou hast broken thy bondage, and saved my sister from a dreadful fate. Let it not be ours to spurn or condemn the penitent: I think, then, that no one in this hall will oppose, or disapprove of my judgment, when I say—rise! we forgive thee!”

And now there was a group of the illustrious, the brave, the beautiful; even the old and dignified Cardinals seemed to share the general satisfaction and joy. Louis, in a friendly manner, leant upon the shoulder of Courtenay, and in the centre of the party, stood Queen Joanna, half supporting, and half embracing the trembling Amalia. But the Pontiff, as spiritual father, and vicegerent of God, took upon himself the task of returning thanks to Heaven, and expatiating on the mysterious dispensations of Providence—dispensations that educe good from evil, and render truth and virtue triumphant at last.

“And gentle members of my Christian fold,” he said, “we would fain now settle a question

which has given not a little disquiet, if we be rightly informed, to the Queen of Naples and her lord. We will at once explain ourselves. We have heard it spoken that this soldier, who has just been saved from death, this English Captain, whom ye call Walter Courtenay, loveth our daughter, even the lady Amalia."

The silent air, the averted countenance, and the burning blushes of the maiden, were beautifully contrasted with the eagerness of Courtenay's manner, and the light which sprang to his eye.

"Howbeit, the descendant of a king," pursued the gallant Clement, "may never wed a personage who is not of royal lineage; therefore, Walter Courtenay, since thy shield beareth not the appropriate arms, thou must resign thy pretensions to the hand of this illustrious lady."

Louis and Joanna here prayed Clement, that the custom of nations might for once be departed from, stating that they fully and freely gave consent, that the injured and magnanimous Englishman should be united to their sister Amalia.

Clement beckoned Courtenay to approach :
“ Why dost thou shun our eye ?” he said ; “ we perceive that thou dost recognize thy ancient guardian and lawful master, whom many years since thou didst desert ;—we knew thee in a moment.”

Courtenay bent his knee, beseeching the Pontiff to forgive him the errors of former years. Long since he would have discovered himself to him, but feared the just anger of the Father of Christendom. He also prayed the Pope, if it were possible, to cast some light upon his parentage, however obscure and plebeian it might be.

“ We did hope ;” answered Clement, “ that neither Italian, Provençal, nor foreigner esteemed us harsh in our rule, or unforgiving in our temper : God wot that we would rather extend our hand in love to all, than fulminate anathemas from the chair of St. Peter. Touching thy last request we readily accede to it. The vow which we took on receiving thee into our

charge, when Prior of St. Baudille, binds us no longer. For the satisfaction of all present, we will repeat the little circumstance ; and then judge, soldier of England, whether born as thou art, thou mayst dare aspire to the hand of a royal maiden."

All hung in breathless attention on the words of Pope Clement, who continued after a moment's pause.

" One night, an English Bishop, who had been travelling in the south of France, was brought to our Priory in a dying state. When shriving him, he begged of me as a last favour, to receive under my care an orphan child that was in his train, of the tender age of three years. Having been appointed his guardian by his late father, who perished under peculiar circumstances, leaving, as was commonly supposed, no issue, the Bishop had fled with him from the popular tumults which then convulsed England, and from the persecutions levelled at the deceased's family by the party then in power. I agreed

faithfully to comply with the dying man's request. He bound me, also, by a promise not to reveal unto the child his origin, until he should have arrived at the age of manhood ; since if he knew his parentage, it was more than probable he would refuse to enter the church, the Bishop's ardent desire having been to rear him as a man of God.

“ The child grew, but wild and untamable as the chamois of the Alps ; and well I deemed that the warrior's lance was more suited to his temperament, than the prelate's crosier. My conjecture was verified, for scarcely had he attained his fifteenth year, when the fiery youth spurned my control, fled from St. Baudille, and was heard of no more.

“ Twelve years have passed away, and now, for the first time since he deserted me, I behold my ancient charge. The term of my vow has expired. Walter Courtenay, retain that name if it pleases thee, but it is not thine—thy mother was Alice, daughter of the lord of Lincoln ; and thy

father was a prince of the royal blood of England
—Thomas Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster.

Reader, we will not say farewell, without informing thee of the destinies which awaited some of the individuals whose characters we have attempted to portray in these pages.

Robert, Bishop of Waradin, for some time braved the storm, which in consequence of his infamous actions burst upon him; but at length he lost even the good graces of the King of Hungary. He rapidly sank in the religious world, became a mendicant friar, and finally closed his career in a house of Charity, contemned and detested by all.

The repentant Forester, having been appointed to an office of respectability and trust in the establishment of Walter Plantagenet, or as we may still call him, Courtenay, married Julie, the daughter of mine host of the Black Saracen;

and in spite of the parsimony of Bumbére, he received with her a handsome dowery.

Charles Artus, the fellow conspirator, and black betrayer of the ambitious Duke of Durazzo, did not long live to enjoy the reward of his perfidy ; during an excursion made with a party of friends to the summit of one of the Apennine mountains north of Benevento, either through intoxication, or some accident, he missed his footing, and falling over a precipice, was dashed to pieces.

In the cemetery attached to the Celestine Convent of Aversa, there was a simple monument of white marble, with a tablet displaying the arms of a royal house. Arrayed in the weeds of mourning, which she seemed resolved never to divest herself of, a female might frequently have been seen bending there. Sometimes, also, she would lead to the spot a young child, and bidding him kneel on the turf, would tell him that a Father who had died ere he was capable of feeling his loss, slept beneath : and

the boy would join his hands, and as the mother's tears fell on his sunny curls, she would teach him to lisp a prayer. That young mother, we scarcely need say, was Maria at the tomb of Durazzo.

Queen Joanna and Prince Louis, without having occasion to petition England or France for aid, again ascended the throne of Naples; for the usurper, partly intimidated by the thunders launched from the Papal chair, and partly summoned to quell insurrections in his own kingdom of Hungary, quitted the smiling plains of Campania the Happy. The few garrisons, and mercenary troops which he left behind him, were unable to withstand the valour of Louis and his chivalric nobility. The court of the Prince and Queen of Naples, was more brilliant than that of any other state on the south of the Alps; and during the years they swayed the sceptre, they commanded the respect and esteem of their subjects; but a detail of subsequent events, does not fall within the design of our narrative.

All the rapture which blesses mortals, who, after having loved long and absorbingly, are united at last, was experienced by Amalia and Walter Courtenay. The remembrance of their trials, and the sorrows they had endured, excited no painful feelings, but, as sunshine is brighter and warmer for the clouds that have passed away, only enhanced the happiness of their lot. Though the attainder, by which his royal father had lost his life and estates, had long been 'reversed,' Courtenay did not quit Italy, a country endeared to him by associations stronger even than those connected with the land of his birth. In the vicinity of Portici, commanding a view of Naples and its magnificent Bay, he fixed his residence; and with a delight which seemed to increase the more the recreation was indulged in, he and Amalia would wander among the enchanting scenes, beautiful and glorious in themselves, as well as hallowed by classic story. And there, also, Queen Joanna and Louis, when affairs of state permitted, would join them; and the asso-

ciated friends, in lettered ease, and the sweet interchange of the offices of courtesy and love, experienced as much satisfaction and happiness as man, in this chequered scene, is permitted to know.

THE END.



